

Rethinking Indigenous Educational Disadvantage
A Critical Analysis of Race and Whiteness in Australian Education Policy

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines Indigenous school education in Australia, through analysing themes of difference, race and whiteness in contemporary education policy. The study asks why educational inequality and disadvantage continue to be experienced by Indigenous school students, despite concerted policy attention towards redressing these issues. It seeks to better understand how Indigenous education is represented in policy and scholarly debates and what implications this has for Indigenous educational achievement. I argue that in order to succeed Indigenous school students are often expected to assimilate into an education system that judges success according to values and expectations influenced by an invisible 'whiteness'.

The investigation of these issues is framed by insights and approaches drawn from three theoretical frameworks. Michel Foucault's concepts of 'discourse', 'disciplinary power', 'regimes of truth' and 'normalisation', and Iris Marion Young's work with issues of difference, 'cultural imperialism', oppression and justice are brought into critical dialogue with critical race theory (CRT). In particular, CRT is engaged as an attempt to bring some new perspectives to understandings of race and difference in Australian education policy. This combination of theories informs an examination of policy (and policy related texts) guided by Foucauldian discourse analysis and critical policy research methods.

Through my analysis I develop a number of arguments. First, that the combined theoretical approach I engage is useful for uncovering some of the silences and assumptions that have typically influenced attempts to achieve educational justice for Indigenous Australians. Second, in the documents I analyse, the ways in which Indigenous students are described commonly positions them as deficient and suggests that these deficiencies are to be remedied through exhibiting more of the behaviours and attitudes of non-Indigenous students. Third, that the commitment to 'inclusion' within the policies analysed is important, but typically maintains a relationship in which a powerful and central white 'norm' remains invisible and dictates how and when the 'Other' is included. Fourth, that in seeking to understand equity issues for Indigenous students it is important to look also at the broader education system and its dominant values and goals. Through analysis of policies related to education for 'all students', I suggest that educational success is commonly identified and assessed according to 'white' norms, within schools that are expected to improve and be accountable within a neo-liberal agenda, which is largely supportive of standardisation and sameness, and not readily accommodating of 'difference'.

Overall, this study has attempted to bring some important conceptual approaches to analysis of current education policy in Australia in order to build greater understanding of Indigenous educational disadvantage. It has sought to open possibilities for addressing issues of race and justice that are characterised by listening, support of difference and responsibility, and commitment to disruption and discomfort.

Declaration

This thesis does not contain material which has been accepted for any other degree in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by any other person, except where due reference is given in the text.

Signed:



Date: 20/10/11

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Lillian Holt – a woman of wisdom, tenacity, insight and wit. A woman who challenged a youthful and idealistic me to look at the idea of whiteness, and my own whiteness, in trying to understand what reconciliation really means in this country. And who did so with the type of love and respect reserved to be given only with the unpopular challenge, the difficult offering, the complex prospect.

With humble gratitude and great respect, thankyou.

It is also dedicated to Shen Narayanasamy – a friend who dances into my life from time to time to offer a thimble of love, a twig of joy, gifts containing potency that somehow create far reaching sustenance and inspiration. And who also tends to wreak havoc during my internal ethical battles – often without even knowing it – offering tribulation and struggle that ultimately pave the way for another way of seeing.

With thanks, love and admiration.

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I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which I have been privileged to walk and work, while writing this thesis. I pay my respects to the people of the Kulin Nations – and their elders past and present – who retain a deep connection to this country and continue to live their lives and cultures, and fight for their rights, with dignity and strength.

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A person is a person because of other people. Zulu proverb

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*I wish I knew how it would feel to be free
I wish I could break all the chains holding me
I wish I could say all the things that I should say
Say 'em loud say 'em clear
For the whole round world to hear
I wish I could share all the love that's in my heart
Remove all the bars that keep us apart
I wish you could know what it means to be me
Then you'd see and agree that every man should be free
I wish I could give all I'm longin' to give
I wish I could live like I'm longin' to live
I wish I could do all the things that I can do...
Nina Simone*

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ABBREVIATIONS and TERMS

ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
ACER	Australian Centre for Educational Research
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CLS	Critical Legal Studies
COAG	Council for Australian Governments
CRT	Critical Race Theory
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy
NT	Northern Territory
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Program for International Student Achievement
UN	United Nations
VAEAI	Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated
WA	Western Australia

Aboriginal	Term used to describe the first peoples of Australia.
Indigenous	Term used to describe the first peoples of Australia.
Koorie	Collective term given to Indigenous peoples of the south-east region of Australia.
Torres Strait Islander	Indigenous peoples of the Torres Strait Islands located off the north-east coast of Australia. These islands are part of Australia.

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary Australian education, student achievement standards are increasingly compared nationally and internationally and high stakes testing, as in other comparable countries, has become an established part of the educational landscape. Concurrently, education is identified and lauded as a strong component in lifting socio-economic disadvantage. Yet this drive for quality, high standards and excellence often struggles to change the nature and outcomes of 'educational failure' attributed to various social groups as defined by intersections of gender, class, ethnicity, location and race. One of these social groups is Indigenous people.

Issues to do with Indigenous education, in particular Indigenous students' disadvantage and inclusion, elicit considerable concern in the field of education, reflecting a broader social concern with the rights and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples in Australia. This is demonstrated by the extensive policy commitment to addressing these matters, evident in publications such as: *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators* (Banks, 2009), *Contextual factors that influence the achievement of Australia's Indigenous students: Results from PISA 2000-2006* (de Bortoli and Thomson, 2010); *Victorian Government Aboriginal Inclusion Framework* (Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat, 2010); the *Wannik Education Strategy for Koorie Students* (Victorian Department of Education, 2008); *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005-2008* (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2006); and *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010-2014* (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2010). Throughout these policies and reports, however, there is wide acknowledgement of the failure to achieve equality for Indigenous students: 'Indigenous students underperform relative to non-Indigenous students on a range of measures' and 'there has been negligible change in Indigenous students' performance over the past ten years, and no closing of the gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students' performances' (Banks, 2009:4.4, 4); 'the disparity between the educational outcomes of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students are well documented and of great concern' (de Bortoli and Thomson, 2010:1); 'the current approach to education for Koorie students has failed to make significant inroads in addressing disadvantage experienced by many of them' (Victorian Department of Education, 2008:7).

Such repeated statements raise fundamental questions about why this inequality and disadvantage persists: this thesis addresses these questions. I argue that analysis of important educational documents demonstrates that the education system, having grown from colonial values remains grounded in Anglo-centric aspirations and intentions or what I refer to as a value system based on 'whiteness'. Educational success,

therefore, is currently influenced by the capacity to assimilate into this system through exhibiting certain ways of knowing and learning that are considered the 'norm'. Through maintaining this 'norm', white perspectives and experiences are not seen as 'different'. This positions 'whiteness', as 'ensembles of local phenomena complexly embedded in socioeconomic, sociocultural, and psychic interrelations' (Frankenberg, 1997:1) at the benevolent centre. The structures embedded with this concept of 'whiteness', and those people working within such structures, are then able to both welcome 'difference' (which due to the powerful position of white cultural values is commonly perceived as cultures or ethnicities other than 'white') into the space it inhabits, and offer remedies for disadvantage. 'White' perspectives and experiences, therefore, remain quietly powerful and central, while limiting opportunities for those outside this 'white norm' to exercise voice, power and change. It is this complex, layered notion of 'whiteness' that I refer to in my work.

It is precisely these issues – which remain largely hidden and yet powerfully present and benevolent – that this thesis intends to investigate. The investigation will seek to expose and analyse the ways white superiority influences educational discourse related to Indigenous students' achievement. I will argue that processes which maintain and contribute to inequality and disadvantage can be illuminated through looking closer at the type of student educational policy discourse encourages, supports and helps produce. I hope to create a small opening for a new way of looking at the ingrained failure of the education system to serve and support Indigenous students. I will ask the questions: how is Indigenous educational disadvantage currently addressed? And how might we open a space for a new way of addressing this disadvantage, one that seeks to understand the nature of oppression and shift the hidden barriers to inclusion?

These questions will be examined by first considering the historical legacies bestowed upon the Australian education system, assessing a cross section of the literature related to these issues. I then analyse elements of Australian educational policy discourse to expose new possibilities for understanding and attending to disadvantage. In order to redress Indigenous educational disadvantage, I argue that Western knowledge systems must be accessible to all students, however, acknowledgment of this as *one* valuable mode of knowledge and not the *only* one, therefore not the 'norm', must be explicit. Much work on redressing educational disadvantage focuses on school-to-work transition. This is important, however, it is not the primary focus of this study. Indeed, I want to pose a number of disruptions to this dominant view, aspects that are often overlooked because of the focus on transitions. I contend that valuable participation in the labour market does not have to occur at the expense of a broad education that includes questioning, thinking about and understanding different perspectives. In addition, matters to do with identity, culture and difference should not be negated in

order to participate effectively in the labour market, and further that good skills for the labour market are not only harnessed through Western frameworks of knowledge; therefore all people can benefit from building knowledge in diverse forms.

This thesis contains an introduction, followed by a literature review and a chapter that explains the theoretical and methodological approaches. These provide important contexts and foundations for the following two chapters, which develop policy analysis. Chapter five draws together the conceptual and policy analysis arguments and suggests some implications related to these, and an overall conclusion to the thesis identifies possible limitations and points towards possibilities for further research.

Chapter one consists of a literature review in which a selection of three intersecting fields of literature relevant to my study are outlined and examined. This provides context for my study and suggests openings in which my work may offer connections and insights to these fields. It is presented under the following headings: 'Indigenous Education', 'The Study of Whiteness' and 'Critical Policy Studies'. Chapter two illustrates the theoretical and methodological frameworks that support this study. The theoretical framework is explained first as it is in part challenges and insights from this combination of theoretical work that have helped to motivate and then frame the work of this study. For the purposes of addressing my research questions, I have chosen to engage with aspects of Critical Race Theory, Foucauldian scholarship on normalization, power and truth, and Iris Marion Young's theories related to social justice. These theories are examined and the aspects I have chosen to work with from each of these approaches are identified and justified, making reference to the limitations these approaches also present. The methodological framework is then explained, which grows out of the challenges identified in the theories and draws guidance from Foucauldian discourse methods and traditions in critical policy analysis.

Chapter three, titled 'Conceptions of the Indigenous Student', begins with a brief historical overview of some of the ways racial difference has been identified and encountered in Australia to contextualise my analytical discussion. This chapter deals with policy specifically related to Indigenous students. It examines the ways in which Indigenous students have been framed in recent educational policies and reports, and investigates the limitations inherent within discursive constructions of both 'disadvantage' and 'inclusion'. The first section of the chapter focuses on the notion of 'disadvantage' and the second section examines 'inclusion'. Chapter four investigates the way success is articulated in some policies and national tests that relate to all students. It is titled 'Education Policy and the Notion of Difference' and begins with a brief outline of the national and international educational climate that currently influences educational decisions in Australia. It then contains two sections of analysis. The first section, 'A Picture of the Successful Student' seeks to identify the attributes encouraged

in policy and national tests to promote success, and it then questions the supposed universality of such attributes. The second section, 'School Improvement and Accountability and the Notion of Difference', addresses the current improvement and accountability agendas in education and examines the ways in which success is positioned in these agendas and the implications this has for inclusion of 'difference'. It suggests that these constructions of success work to exclude Indigenous students through devaluing the knowledge and experiences that could encompass a different notion of success, and through the disempowering label of failure, commonly attached to their lack of success.

Chapter five concludes the thesis and is titled, 'Implications and Recommendations: What possibilities are there for change?'. This chapter outlines the contributions this study has made both conceptually and substantively. It draws together the insights and arguments developed through the analysis chapters and suggests the examination of discourse assists in better understanding Indigenous disadvantage and the potential for change. It then revisits the issues that have been revealed through the analysis in chapters three and four to suggest some possibilities for further work with these issues. A brief summary conclusion closes the thesis.

This introduction has discussed the rationale and focus of my study. I will now turn to a review of the relevant literature to further explain my rationale and the significance of the work of this study.

Chapter One

Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to provide a context for my study, position the study within the scholarly field and demonstrate the contributions it will endeavour to make. The literature will be reviewed according to the following fields of inquiry: 'Indigenous Education', 'The Study of Whiteness' and 'Critical Policy Studies'. The literature related to these three spheres of work is vast, demonstrating the range of methodological, theoretical and conceptual approaches relevant to the issues addressed in my work. Research related to Indigenous education tends to be concerned with investigating disadvantage and achievement of Indigenous students or contributing to the recognition and advocacy of Indigenous knowledges. Whiteness studies in Australia is influenced largely by work in this area in the US and is growing in prominence, with some engagement of these ideas in educational research. And critical policy studies is shown to be concerned with national and global issues of equity and critical investigation of the effects of values on striving for educational and political justice. A review of this literature shows important avenues and opportunities to develop new approaches to understanding Indigenous experiences of inequality in education and opens possibilities for new ways of striving for equity.

Indigenous Education

The 'problem' of educating Indigenous people has been a concern in Australia from the time when Indigenous children began to be educated by colonists and missionaries. Gray (2008), however, suggests it was not until the 1960s that 'Australia 'discovered' the problem of profound educational disadvantage among its Indigenous people' (p 197). This caused a steady stream of policies and programs designed to address this disadvantage. Two studies that chart the responses to 'problems' of Indigenous education since the 1960s are Myra Dunn's work, 'Lessons from the Past: Education and Racism in Australia' (2001) and Merridy Malin and Debra Maidment's 'Education, Indigenous Survival and Well-being: Emerging Ideas and Programs' (2003). These studies reveal the systematic exclusion and institutional racism common throughout the early to mid 20th century (Dunn, 2001:66-69, Malin and Maidment, 2003:86-7) including the more recent 'close the gap' and 'bridging the gap' agendas aimed at addressing disadvantage, raising outcomes for Indigenous students and making connections between home and school cultures (Dunn, 2001:70, Malin and Maidment, 2003:90). These studies provide context for understanding the complex area of Indigenous education.

The literature on Indigenous education seems to be divided into two broad perspectives. One is focused on the need to raise standards and improve outcomes for Indigenous students and follows the global trend towards measuring, ranking and comparing educational achievement and attainment. The other is focused on the need to honour and develop Indigenous knowledge and respect Indigenous ways of learning, being and understanding as different and valuable in a move towards self-determination and decolonisation.

National and International Literature on Indigenous Education

Australian governments (both federal and states) and the United Nations (UN) have produced various reports addressing Indigenous education. Recent literature includes *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005-2008* (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2006) and reports with sections devoted to educational issues (see for example, Banks, 2009 (delivered every two years), Calma, 2009, Anaya, 2010). These reports reflect a commitment by governments and human rights based organisations to address what is still considered a major 'problem' in education, thus illustrating the significance of this issue. There is acknowledgement that there has been some improvement 'over recent decades' (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2006:4), however, it is also noted that 'it is distressingly apparent that many years of policy effort have not delivered desired outcomes; indeed in some important respects the circumstances of Indigenous people appear to have deteriorated or regressed' (Banks, 2009:19). The recommendations and intentions of these government reports are similar. The *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005-2008* (2006) report focuses on quality in education (p 5, 8), respect of Indigenous contexts (p 5), partnerships between schools and communities (p 6), cross-cultural education and high expectations of students (p 6). In the *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Report 2009* (2009), which I will thoroughly examine in chapter three, the authors report on the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) targets for Indigenous education, which also relate to addressing poor Indigenous achievement in literacy and numeracy (p 6.15), student attendance (p 6.3) and teacher quality (p 6.8). These reports highlight the 'gaps' in Indigenous achievement, but fail to address why these gaps have occurred and more importantly why they are persistent. The recommendations tend to refer to actions that are known to encourage success in student outcomes (regular attendance, cultural recognition, quality service provision) but pay little attention to why these things seem to be much harder to achieve for Indigenous people.

The reports by the UN and the Australian Human Rights Commission have greater focus on access to cultural learning opportunities such as Indigenous students being supported to learn their own languages, as well as English, at school. The 2009 *Social*

Justice Report (Calma, 2009), produced for the Australian Human Rights Commission, devotes a chapter to reporting on the state of Indigenous languages across Australia and makes recommendations related to supporting bilingual schooling in the Northern Territory as 'many countries across the world are adopting this approach as best practice' (p 117) and supporting language immersion in traditional languages at pre-school level (p 117). The UN Special Rapporteur makes the following recommendation regarding Indigenous education:

Indigenous systems of teaching, cross-cultural curricula and bilingual programming should be further incorporated into the education of indigenous children and youth. In addition, indigenous communities and their authorities should have greater participation in educational programming. (Anaya, 2010:21)

These reports are advising greater emphasis on Indigenous ways of learning and knowing and advocating a self-determination approach, which aims to empower Indigenous people. However, barriers seem to remain that limit participation and inclusion, thus suggesting that a different approach is needed to reveal some new perspectives on why Indigenous education remains in a state of disarray.

Achievement or Disadvantage

Further studies related to Indigenous education tend to focus on particular aspects of Indigenous achievement or disadvantage, suggesting programs or strategies that might be effective in raising outcomes and addressing disadvantage (for example, Faulkner et al., 2010, Freeman and Bochner, 2008, Rahman, 2010, Taylor, 2010, Warren, 2009, Wheldall, 2010). A range of methodological approaches are taken by researchers in this area and they present findings that note the importance of cultural connection, explicit and quality teaching and consistent attendance at school. Although this indicates there is much being done to address the disparity of outcomes through various programs there remains a lack of research into the underlying factors that prevent Indigenous students from reaching the proposed outcomes. Common terminology in this literature includes 'bridging the gap' (Freeman and Bochner, 2008:9), 'closing the gap', 'mind the gap' (Wheldall, 2010:1), 'at risk' (Freeman and Bochner, 2008:9), 'chronic under-attenders' (Taylor, 2010:680), 'consistent levels of underachievement' (Faulkner et al., 2010:98), giving insight into discourse related to Indigenous education. The language adopted tends to frame Indigenous students as in deficit, in a position in which they are constantly trying to catch up to the rest of the Australian student population. And while it is important to recognise disadvantage, there is a danger of falling into a discourse focused too heavily on the 'victim' and what they must do to improve their situation. Analysis of discourses that maintain a situation of victimhood, deficit and individual pathology is therefore required.

Significantly, much research investigates and reports on Indigenous people and their 'problems', which means their voices remain subordinate. This is slowly changing and Indigenous advocates such as Chris Sarra and Noel Pearson have offered major perspectives related to Indigenous achievement and disadvantage. Sarra (2004), through his work as principal of Cherbourg State School in Queensland has laboured to shift the discourse of underachievement and deficiency around Indigenous students to one in which Aboriginal children take on an identity of 'strong and smart' (p 14-15). This has created opportunities for Indigenous students to achieve and perform well, no longer being so constrained by a system that places them in need of 'catching up'. My study will contribute to this area and build on Sarra's work, investigating further what is embedded in the discourse and continues to hold most Indigenous students back. Pearson (2004), however, takes up the neo-liberal push towards accountability in education suggesting, 'there is an urgent need for renewed commitment to school inspections, universal tests and other devices to ensure standards and to make schools accountable' (p 1). Pearson's solutions to the crisis in education for Indigenous students are market orientated, in which the 'supply and demand-sides of education' are addressed 'simultaneously' (p 2). In many ways the appeal of this approach is understandable in Indigenous communities that have been severely neglected, disempowered, oppressed and overtly discriminated against for many years: there is a desire for systems that have been neglectful to be held accountable. It is concerning, however, that this course of action may continue the colonial power relationship that has caused so much damage already. I will suggest there is another way of looking at Indigenous educational disadvantage that works to break the bonds of colonial oppression and open new spaces for honouring and incorporating Indigenous knowledge, experiences and identities, while also ensuring success within the Western knowledge framework.

Indigenous Knowledge

The emergence of scholarly work concerned with Indigenous knowledges in recent years has, Nakata (2007a) suggests, occurred due to knowledge becoming a global currency (p 7). This has given Indigenous people an opportunity to 'insert their own narratives, critique, research, and knowledge production' into the previously non-Indigenous constructed 'corpus' (Nakata, 2007a:8). This has been vitally important in Indigenous struggles for self-determination, dignity and justice against a backdrop of considerable oppression. It has not, however, made significant inroads in discourses of school education, remaining thus far largely confined to comment on the tertiary and community education realms (for example, Brown, 2010, Christie, 2005, Christie, 2006, Nakata, 2007a, Nakata, 2010, Tur et al., 2010, Bedford and Casson, 2010). Research related to school education is focused primarily on Indigenous deficits with a small

number of studies addressing the idea of Indigenous knowledge in school settings (for example, Harrison and Greenfield, 2011, Hutchins et al., 2009, Kerwin, 2011, Kitson and Bowes, 2010). There has also been a small amount of critical engagement with issues of Indigenous knowledge exclusion from the curriculum (for example, Rose, 2007).

Various ethnographic studies carried out in Indigenous communities (for example, Eickelkamp, 2010, Taylor, 2010) have also given insight into cultural differences in learning, relating and teaching. This ethnographic research and the growing work on Indigenous knowledge demonstrates an increasing body of knowledge around different ways that Indigenous people might learn, perceive the world and create knowledge. This will not be able to be utilised, however, if we do not seek to understand the underlying causes of exclusion, and oppression of such differences, and the predominantly failed attempts at inclusion.

The Study of Whiteness

Theorising the concept of whiteness has been a relatively recent development in scholarship related to race and has appeared most strongly in the United States. One of the significant voices in the call to address white privilege has been that of black feminist scholar bell hooks (1990), who asks, 'what does it mean when primarily white men and women are producing the discourse around Otherness?' (p 53). She explains her awakening to the power of whiteness as a theoretical frame, when she realised she could understand 'white culture, though not simply in terms of skin colour – rather whiteness as a concept underlying racism, colonization, and cultural imperialism' (hooks, 1990:166). hooks has been instrumental in calling for white people to interrogate their privilege in their work towards anti-racism (for example, 1990:54) and she has observed her white feminist colleagues begin to realise the important intersection of race and gender in their work (1990:53). She has also made contributions specifically addressing the education sphere (2003, 1994), speaking largely of experience with tertiary education. She advocates identifying the 'white supremacist thought and action we have all unconsciously learned' and then challenging this through teaching experiences (2003:37). In Australia calls such as this have been limited and often remain dormant, suggesting a gap in research that needs to be addressed to understand why this situation persists and what possibilities are available to create an opening into this way of thinking and addressing inequality.

Beginnings of Scholarship around Whiteness

Scholarship dealing with whiteness in the US and Canada became more prominent during the 1990s with much work being published related to this new way of approaching racism (Bowser and Hunt, 1996, Clark and O'Donnell, 1999, Fine et al.,

1997, Frankenberg, 1997, Giroux, 1997, Jones and Carter, 1996, Kivel, 1996, Lea and Helfand, 2004, Razack, 1998). The ongoing effects of racism were being questioned in America, as although the civil rights movement had been successful on some levels, racial inequality remained a concern (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). Jones and Carter (1996) observe how the concept and power of whiteness began to be revealed: 'over the years this blatant racism has been transformed from conspicuous oppression and enslavement into subtle and complex systematic white preference or conferred dominance' (p 21). This demonstrates how the concept of whiteness was beginning to enter the discourse of racism in North America, whereas at the same time in Australia racial discourse was based much more around 'Aboriginal' reconciliation (Grattan, 2000) and a contest regarding polarised views of Australian history perceived to either be supportive of the 'black' struggle or 'white' settlement (MacIntyre and Clark, 2003). Within this discourse the notion of white privilege was absent and racial issues were focused firmly on Aboriginal people.

Scholarship concerned specifically with whiteness as a powerful cultural and identity category first seems to appear in Australian academic literature in the late 1990s when, influenced by American work, Australian scholars began to discuss and write about 'whiteness' (McKay, 1999:3). Various historians and feminists also began to refer to this concept in their work (for example, Haebich, 2000, Hage, 1998, Paisley, 1997). It became more prominent at the beginning of the first decade of the 21st century, when Indigenous scholars such as Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2004b) began to question the focus on Indigenous people in Australia's race discourse. At this time academic conversation about whiteness also occurred at conferences held in Melbourne, focusing largely on whiteness related to historical studies (Boucher et al., 2009) and Adelaide (see keynote address, Haggis, 2004). This has led to a small movement of research into whiteness in Australia, led largely by the Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Association. Studies employing a whiteness perspective that have emerged from this movement have addressed a range of issues including, culture and identity, refugees, the law, education, politics and sexuality (for example, Moreton-Robinson, 2005, Larbalestier, 2004, Perera, 2005, Due, 2008, Koerner, 2010, Fisher, 2008, Moreton-Robinson, 2004a, Cote, 2009, Gunstone, 2009, Moran, 2004, Caluya, 2006). These studies, along with recent books and edited collections (Carey and McLisky, 2009, Maddison, 2011) demonstrate a growing foundation for critical race and whiteness studies in Australia. In recent years the stalling of the movement for Indigenous sovereignty has also led to some work around the link between this and 'the reassertion of White Australian nationalism' (Osuri et al., 2009, see also, Kelly, 2007). This suggests what has been a seemingly tentative step towards interrogation of whiteness in the Australian scholarly landscape is beginning to expand into areas that were already perceived to be a domain of social justice and attempt to uncover some

underlying causes for their lack of success.

Whiteness Scholarship in Education

The study of whiteness as related to education is again more established in America than in Australia. Whiteness related studies in North America have focused on a range of educational issues, including teacher education, identity and teacher attitudes, pedagogy, structural racism and community education (Allen, 2004, Giroux, 1997, Lemons, 2004, Lippin, 2004, Marx, 2004, O'Brien, 2004, Picower, 2009, Riviere, 2008, Vaught and Castagno, 2008). The work of critical race and whiteness studies in education in the US has connections with both the critical legal studies movement, which endeavoured to uncover race discrimination inherent in the legal system (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001, Tate, 1997) and critical pedagogy, which aims to challenge the status quo in educational practice (Kincheloe et al., 1998:24).

There has been some educational research that addresses whiteness in Australia (for example, Aveling, 2006, Aveling, 2007, Nicoll, 2004, Cote, 2009, Fredericks, 2009, Gunstone, 2009, Hatchell, 2004) and this has made important inroads to a largely untheorised area in this country. This scholarship is predominantly focused on examining issues related to tertiary education (for example, Aveling, 2006, Fredericks, 2009, Gunstone, 2009, Nicoll, 2004). Aveling (2006) and Nicoll (2004) present critical reflections on personal experiences of teaching tertiary studies within a critical whiteness studies framework, while Fredericks (2009) and Gunstone (2009) use experiences within Australian tertiary institutions to critically analyse the impact of whiteness on the inclusion of Indigenous people. Fredericks (2009) argues that many universities are 'reproducing imperial attitudes and processes which marginalise and exclude us whilst proclaiming they want to include and involve us' (p 9). Gunstone (2009) suggests practices of whiteness 'permeate throughout a number of interrelated key areas of universities', including 'governance, policies, cultural awareness courses, employment, research, curriculum and student support' (p 5-6). Hatchell's (2004) work uses interviews with white adolescent male students to investigate links between racism and whiteness and examine 'ways in which adolescent male students constructed their own identities within a privileged white position' (p 111). And Cote (2009) provides a comparative historical discourse analysis looking at the role of education in colonial settlements in Asia and Australia and the intersection of class and race in producing a superior white bourgeois subject position. These studies provide insight into some of the ways in which white power and privilege impact identity formation, institutional practices and relationships and suggest that whiteness is an important concern in restoring justice to Indigenous people in Australia.

Although scholarship related to whiteness in Australia has been growing in recent years, there is a need to maintain this growth and commit to strengthening an interrogation of whiteness, as this form of power remains a marginalised issue in the predominantly neo-liberal Australian political, policy and social spheres.

Critical Policy Studies

Rizvi and Lingard (2010) suggest that policy studies is 'a relatively recent field of academic endeavour', emerging 'during the 1950s in mainly liberal democratic countries' (p 1). This field of study is important to my work as I will be using policy documents and related material to investigate the ways Indigenous students are positioned within the educational discourse and inherent barriers to inclusion that exist within this discourse. Critical policy research within both the fields of education and Indigenous studies is relevant to my study and I propose my research will make important connections between these fields.

Education Policy

In the current education policy climate, the movement towards national testing, national curriculum and global standardisation is gaining momentum, and analysis of these issues has been prominent in the field of critical policy studies (Apple, 2006, Alexander, 2010, Olssen, 2006, Marginson, 1997a, Rizvi and Lingard, 2010, Tannock, 2009). These studies contribute to a transnational body of work that is critical of a globalised education economy that is often led by Western national interests and organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). My study, although not specifically concerned with issues of globalisation is influenced by this discourse and the values inherent in Australia striving to compete globally. Transnational and global issues underscore indigenous politics and inequalities and neo-liberal policy agendas also have transnational connections. These issues and discourses currently frame much education reform, and equity policies related to this reform. I will therefore make reference to the links with this work and raise some questions around the possibilities for a critical race and whiteness approach to illuminate some connections to these discourses.

Equity and access to education have been prominent concerns within critical policy research, driving the work of scholars from the UK (for example, Gillborn, 2000, Ball, 1990b) and the US (for example, Apple, 2006). The recent British study on education reform, the *Cambridge Review of Primary Education* (Alexander et al., 2010), provided comprehensive analysis of the primary education system and in particular the current policy preoccupation with 'standards' (Alexander, 2010:3). It revealed an array of findings, suggesting 'the national and international evidence on standards was both

positive and negative, and also in certain respects problematic' (Alexander, 2010:4). Alexander (2010) also refers to questions of cultural and linguistic imperialism in a competing global education economy (p 10). Michael Apple, who has written extensively on issues of neo-liberalism, democracy and conservatism and questioned what constitutes 'official knowledge' has also contributed important perspectives to this area (see for example, Apple, 2006, Apple, 1996, Apple, 2001, Apple, 2000, Apple, 1993). This work has connections with critical race theory (CRT) and offers a challenge to critical analysis work in education in Australia.

Lingard and Rizvi have both been heavily involved in research in this field in Australia. They have examined and questioned policy issues related to multiculturalism, ethnicity, gender and globalisation (see for example, Lingard, 2010, Lingard et al., 1993, Rizvi, 1993, Rizvi and Lingard, 2010). This has been complimented by Keating, who has created an historical analysis of education policy and social inclusion in Australia (2010), encompassing exploration of factors related to geography, gender and Indigenous status. Marginson's work regarding education and public policy in Australia has also been influential in the field (for example, Marginson, 1997b, Marginson, 1993).

Critical policy work specific to Indigenous education has been led by scholars such as Beresford, Partington and Gray (Beresford and Gray, 2006, Beresford and Partington, 2003, Gray, 2008) who have charted the policy discourse around Indigenous education and been critical of the many factors that impact the educational experiences of Indigenous students (Beresford and Partington, 2003) and the range of policy models employed to address Indigenous educational needs (Beresford and Gray, 2006). Prout (2009) offers new research to this field, using semi-structured and in depth interviews with Indigenous people in a community in Western Australia. She illustrates the relationship between Aboriginal spatiality and education outcomes, and calls for the need to consider this when designing education policy related to similar Indigenous communities.

In summary, this literature questions policy as value neutral and investigates the impact of a global agenda that emphasizes standardised testing and national and international comparisons. It suggests such an agenda risks silencing social factors that contribute to educational achievement and failure, and lacks an understanding of contextual needs.

Indigenous Policy

There have been a number of scholars in Australia interested in the specifics of Indigenous political equality and Indigenous peoples' relationship with the Australian political sphere. Counter political histories have been created in response to the largely Eurocentric histories of the late 1960s and historical analysis of Aboriginal political rights has been explored (for example, Attwood and Markus, 1999, Attwood, 2003). These

provide significant historical background to the ways Indigenous people have experienced political and social encounters in Australia. This is important to a thorough understanding of the foundations upon which the issues of my study rest. This picture of the positioning of Indigenous people by the Australian state is embellished by Bennett (1999) who provides a detailed historical analysis of various aspects of policy design and delivery related to Indigenous Australians. He analyses a large range of political, legal and academic sources and suggests 'prejudice against Aboriginal people and their place in Australia has coloured so much of the political relations between European settlers and the indigenous residents' (p 13).

More recent research provides analysis of the history of policy failure in Indigenous affairs (Maddison, 2009), noting Patrick Dodson's observation that policy has consistently been about 'their solutions to us as the problem' (cited in Maddison, 2009:1). Issues of disadvantage and dysfunction (2009:xxxix), the complexity of Aboriginal lives and aspirations (2009:2) and the consistent refusal by the government to listen to Indigenous people when designing policy (2009:21) are addressed in this work.

This literature acknowledges the great failings of policy related to Indigenous people in Australia and is concerned with power and the colonial impact of continued inequality experienced by Indigenous Australians, however, a specific engagement with the ideas of whiteness and white privilege is not prominent in this field.

Conclusion

This review has highlighted aspects of a large body of scholarly work related to Indigenous education, critical race and whiteness studies and critical policy studies.

In the first section I demonstrated the way in which research into Indigenous education has typically been divided between those seeking to address disadvantage or achievement, and those building a body of work around Indigenous knowledge. The former tend to offer solutions or explanations for the education system's consistent failure in servicing the needs of Indigenous students and the latter tends to highlight the differences between Indigenous and European knowledge. Indigenous knowledge research also poses questions related to how these different epistemological and ontological positions may interact to create more inclusive learning spaces.

In the second section I outlined the relatively recent emergence of the field of critical whiteness studies, tracing the origins of this scholarly work to the 1990s in the USA and then the growing interest in these ideas and approaches in Australia. This shows the fairly tentative steps critical race and whiteness studies have taken in Australia to enter a space that is often hostile to discussion related to racial inequality and the prospect of

white privilege, and the limited engagement with these issues within the Australian educational research community.

And finally, in the third section, I illustrated the impact critical policy studies has had on the field of education and Indigenous studies, revealing the issues this research has encountered and the ways in which this research seeks to illuminate the values and processes inherent in policy design and delivery. This provides insight into the discourses that are guided by such policies and has proven to be an effective analytical tool in looking at possibilities for change, although there has not been much work done in bringing together critical policy work from both the fields of education and Indigenous studies.

This study aims to draw together aspects of each of these fields of research in order to propose possibilities for looking at issues of Indigenous educational disadvantage from a critical whiteness perspective, through critically examining some of the features of educational policy. The next chapter will explain the theoretical and methodological approaches that inform my analysis.

Chapter Two

Theoretical and Methodological Frameworks

Introduction

There are many theoretical approaches potentially relevant to an analysis of how whiteness as 'truth' is constructed and operates within educational discourses, and in particular how this affects the way Indigenous students are positioned in the educational discourse and perceived within the education system. For the purposes of my study, I have chosen to draw from three different, yet complementary, theoretical approaches. This combination of approaches, I argue, offers important lenses for this investigation. I have drawn on elements of each approach to design a study which seeks to expose some of the silences that contribute to both inhibiting educational achievement of Indigenous students and maintaining the illusion of an equitable and inclusive education system. Indeed, challenges posed by this range of theoretical work have, in part, provided an impetus for this study. The theoretical framework outlined below, therefore, at once, inspires and guides the analysis and the work of this thesis, while the methodological approach emerges from, and is consistent with, theoretical debates and concepts I am exploring.

The study takes the form of a critical analysis of educational discourse, using key Australian education policy texts that address issues of difference, equity and improvement in education. This approach is inspired by the work of Michel Foucault and his concept of a discourse as a 'system of representation' (Hall, 2001:72), which impacts upon the ways in which power, knowledge and truth are privileged, negotiated and experienced. The study also addresses issues of equity, difference and social justice, and this aspect of the analysis is guided by the work of feminist political philosopher Iris Marion Young. These two approaches provide the conceptual backdrop for my focus on critical race theory (CRT), which I work with to draw attention to issues of race, racism and 'whiteness' in conceptions of Indigenous educational issues. As CRT is often critiqued as US-centric (Rizvi, 2009) there may be some limitations to its application in an Australian context. However, I argue that it also offers some important possibilities for a white researcher addressing issues of racial inequality in Australia, as it impels us to look specifically at the power of whiteness and not just the 'disadvantage' or 'inclusion' of the 'Other', which in the Australian education context has been the dominant approach to addressing Indigenous education.

In the following section I will explain the aspects of each theoretical approach that I will be working with in this study. I will also note the limitations that emerge through using these approaches in relation to a specific Australian issue and explain the choices I

have made to combine aspects of each of these approaches to address these limitations. I will then describe the methodological approach I have chosen to employ.

Theoretical Framework

Foucault: Discourse, Power and Truth

Perspectives from Foucault's work are drawn on for both methodological and theoretical purposes. Foucault's concept of 'discourse' as an investigative field provides methodological impetus to this study and I have selected his ideas of 'discourse', 'truth', 'power' and 'normalisation' to guide some of the analytical work. Although Foucault's work is not usually recognised as addressing issues of race there are aspects of his theories that offer important support to my work. Stoler (1995) suggests Foucault strategically linked the 'history of sexuality to the construction of race' (p 19) and although few people engaged with Foucault's work have recognised or considered Foucault's references to racism, there are, she argues, powerful possibilities in doing so (p 19). Foucault's analyses, therefore, have significant implications for examining race and whiteness. As Stoler (1995) argues, drawing from Foucault's conception of normalisation, 'modern racism is the historical outcome of a normalising society' (p 35). While it is not my intention to uncover specific references to racism in Foucault's work, as Stoler has sought to do, I will select some aspects of Foucault's theoretical framework I believe are useful in seeking to understand the effects of race and whiteness on elements of Australian educational discourse.

Foucault's conception of 'discourse' enables me to identify a space in which to position my investigation. His argument, that 'discourses', or 'systems of representation' (Hall, 2001:72) encompass particular, often unacknowledged rules about what is a truth and who speaks, when, how and with what authority (Ball, 1990a:2), distinguishes an investigative field in which to examine issues of Indigenous 'disadvantage' and 'inclusion'. Foucault's analysis of discourse offers opportunities to see how some ways of talking, writing and conducting oneself are defined as acceptable within a discourse while other ways are limited or restricted (Hall, 2001:72). Foucault (1989) suggests 'discourse is constituted by a group of sequences of signs, in so far as they are statements, that is, in so far as they can be assigned certain modalities of existence' (p 121). He, therefore, inspires a way of looking at how 'certain modalities of existence' become 'truths' that are dominant within the discourse of education in Australia, the forms of power that encourage these 'truths' and how those who do not conform to these 'truths' are seen in need of 'normalisation'. Foucault's concept of discourse also grounds the theoretical approach in this study as he offers ways of both describing discourses and investigating their characteristics. O'Farrell (2005) notes the complex and at times ambiguous ways in which Foucault used the idea of discourse and she

helpfully links it to other concepts in his work. She suggests that Foucault understood discursive practices as being connected to 'a particular time, space, and cultural setting' (p 79). O'Farrell further suggests that Foucault 'describes discourse as the location where power and knowledge intersect' (2005:81). This concept of discourse also offers a theoretical grounding for my application of further elements of Foucault's work, in particular the ideas of 'truth', 'power' and 'normalisation'.

Foucault's (1980) interest in 'seeing historically how effects of truth are produced within discourses' (p 118), opens up the idea of truth as constructed phenomena. He describes how these constructed phenomena become supported and maintained within discourses,

Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (Foucault, 1980:131)

Thus 'truth' for Foucault was not about distinguishing fact and fiction but recognising and demonstrating that knowledge 'organises itself strategically and politically' (O'Farrell, 2005:87). He argued that certain 'apparatus' and institutions produce and maintain certain truths, that these truths are both enabled and governed by power (Foucault, 1980:131-2, Foucault, 1977:200) and that this creates questions regarding the status of truth and the economic and political roles of truths (Foucault, 1980:132). He suggested dominant 'truths' can be illuminated through analysing the discourse they belong to. The investigation of 'regimes of truth' embedded in discourses, and in particular in the act of 'truth telling', therefore, he suggested involves asking, 'who is able to tell the truth, about what, with what consequences, and with what relation to power' (Foucault cited in Besley and Peters, 2007:55).

Intimately connected to the idea of truth in Foucault's work is the idea of power and the effects this has on the construction and maintenance of truths within discourses. Foucault (1980) argued that it is 'relations of power, not relations of meaning' (p 114) that cast greater light on matters of truth. Foucault's scrutiny of power has been noted as notoriously changeable (O'Farrell, 2005:98) but he has argued that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries power began to be exercised through social production and social service (Foucault, 1980:125). This involved, he argued, a shift in the ways power is applied and exercised from sovereign power, power imposed on others from above (O'Farrell, 2005:102), to what he describes as panopticism (O'Farrell, 2005:103), understood as power as self-regulating, controlling and applied through an 'inspecting gaze' (O'Farrell, 2005:103-104). He contends that power is not always repressive but can often be productive (O'Farrell, 2005:100-101) and something that

infiltrates a discourse and influences bodies, acts, attitudes and behaviour (Foucault, 1980:125). Thus these bodies, acts, attitudes and behaviours are reinforced through productive power and social norms. Foucault proposed a complex understanding of power as taking many different forms, being possible to exercise and resist, and producing particular types of behaviour (O'Farrell, 2005:100-101). He identified and analysed different types of power (Fendler, 2010:44) – disciplinary power, biopower, governmentality (O'Farrell, 2005:102-107). In my study I will focus particularly on his notion of disciplinary power. Foucault links this form of power with ideas of surveillance and discipline (O'Farrell, 2005:102-104, Fendler, 2010:44-45). He suggests discipline is a mechanism that strives to facilitate 'how to keep someone under surveillance, how to control his conduct, his behaviour, his aptitudes, how to improve his performance, multiply his capacities, how to put him where he is most useful' (cited in O'Farrell, 2005:102).

Foucault (1979) describes 'normalisation' as one of the 'great instruments of power' (p 184) and links it to a range of changes within social institutions, including the 'introduction of standardized education' (p 184). Normalisation and surveillance, he suggests, are combined in the act of the 'examination', which aims to produce objects of knowledge and power (O'Farrell, 2005:105). The examination requires reproduction of particular knowledges and behaviours (O'Farrell, 2005:105) and enables 'knowledge that is transformed into political investment' (Foucault, 1979:185). He further argued that the surveillance of the modern institution produced a powerful gaze (Foucault, 1980:151) creating a simultaneously indiscreet and absolutely discreet power machinery (Foucault, 1980:156-9, Foucault, 2006:127-8), important in the maintenance of 'normality'.

The concepts I have selected from Foucault's work enable ways of assessing educational discourse in Australia as a domain of contested truths and prepares the ground for investigating the ways in which 'whiteness' can be seen to function as a particularly powerful 'truth'. Foucault's concepts of power and normalisation help to examine and explain the types of knowledge and behaviours that have been deemed 'normal' and the mechanisms employed to drive all students towards 'normality', my focus being on the powerful presence of 'whiteness' as an indicator of normality.

In this section I have discussed how key concepts from Foucault's work provide analytical support to my study. I will now briefly explain the support Iris Young's work brings to this theoretical grounding and the ways in which her perspectives add substance, for the purposes of my study, to the aspects of Foucault's work with which I have chosen to engage. I will also outline the ways I will weave together elements of these two theoretical frames to provide a foundation for the important theoretical guidance offered by CRT.

Social Justice Theory: Difference within Equality

I bring together a concern for social justice and dilemmas of difference with a Foucauldian focus on 'truth', 'normalisation' and 'power' to create conceptual foundations and support for the application of CRT. To examine issues of social justice and difference I turn to feminist philosopher Iris Marion Young and attempt to demonstrate how her ideas of difference, oppression and structural inequality can be brought into dialogue with Foucault's concepts of truth, normalisation and power. Young's work has been important for turning questions of justice to consider identity, difference and social relationships beyond material and resource distribution. This has created intense debate, with particularly strong critique from feminist scholars such as Nancy Fraser (1997), who see Young as ignoring or underplaying issues of redistribution. This debate is important and has been extensively rehearsed by others (for example, Gewirtz, 1998:478-482), however, it is not the focus of my argument here. I will instead garner the perspectives Young has illuminated around difference and oppression that are useful to my analysis, and discuss the ways I will use these to complement the theory I am extracting from the work of Foucault and CRT.

One of the problems commonly encountered when engaging with issues of equality and inclusion is how to conceptualise and analyse 'difference'. 'Difference' is often sidelined as 'negative' or rejected in a quest to ensure everyone has the *same* opportunities and provisions. Young (2001) is perhaps implicitly interested in the concept of 'normalisation' through what she explains as structural inequality: 'a set of reproduced social processes that reinforce one another to enable or constrain individual actions in many ways' (p 2). Both these approaches examine how social institutions act to produce sameness and denounce difference, thus encouraging people to behave, conduct themselves and influence others in particular ways. Young (1990), therefore, proposes that 'an emancipatory politics that affirms group difference involves a reconception of the meaning of equality' (p 157-8). In *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990) she outlines the problems associated with assimilationist equality (p 158-163) and discusses the 'concept of a social group' (p 42-48), suggesting that complex societies contain many social groups that are different to one another and also contain difference within (p 48). She proposes, therefore, that social group differentiation needs to be viewed in 'relational rather than substantial terms', which helps prevent reifying social groups (2000:89).

Young (1990) proposes that there are 'five faces of oppression', which encompass exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence (p 48-63). This provides a way of understanding oppression and consequently justice in ways that seek to address the complexity of difference. It also situates oppression as a 'structural concept' and recognises its impact on 'social groups' not just individuals

(Young, 1990:40-43). Young (2007) argues that people act under sociohistorical influences, suggesting that 'collective actions have left determinate effects on the physical and cultural environment which condition future action in specific ways' (p 170), which then forms particular conditioning of interactions within such environments (Young, 2000:96), or what Foucault may call discourses. This creates, she suggests, a situation in which some groups of people experience 'systematic threat of domination or deprivation', while others have 'opportunities for developing and exercising capacities' (2007:170). Acknowledgement of structural inequality is important, she contends, however, 'we need also to be able to give an account of how social processes produce and reproduce these patterns' (Young, 2001:2).

Young's work with the idea of 'cultural imperialism' is particularly important to this study. She suggests 'cultural imperialism involves the paradox of experiencing oneself as invisible at the same time that one is marked out as different' (1990:60). Cultural imperialism is perpetuated, she argues, when there is a blindness to difference, as this allows privileged groups to seem neutral and universal (Young, 1990:165). She maintains that full participation in society should not be predicated on the rejection of one's cultural identity (Young, 1990:166), however, cultural imperialism requires those not of the dominant culture to assimilate in order to be accepted (p 165). This concept has parallels with some aspects of CRT, as I discuss further below, and therefore contributes to a deep reading of the complex issues of race, power and oppression.

Young has been instrumental in bringing ideas of culture and power to conceptions of justice. This form of justice in which there is an absence of cultural dominance and the practice of recognition and respect of difference has been described as 'recognitional justice' (Gewirtz, 2006:74). Gerwitz (2006) has taken these aspects of Young's work and extended them in ways she believes are implicitly present in Young's work, to suggest the idea of 'associational justice' (p 75). Gerwitz and Power (2001) define associational injustice as 'patterns of injustice amongst individuals and amongst social groups which prevent some people from participating fully in decisions which affect the conditions within which they live and act' (p 41). This idea of participation is important to my analysis of inclusion and I will draw on this work when assessing the effects race and whiteness have on educational inclusion and participation.

Young's perspectives on structural inequality, group oppression and difference within equality help to reveal and explain some of the complexities of the ways in which Indigenous students are conceived of within education policy. I propose that this complements Foucault's ways of explaining the characteristics of discourses and is useful for illuminating the impact of race and whiteness on institutional relations and processes. It provides possibilities for confronting the complexity of 'race' and 'truth' through enabling consideration of difference within particular groups and particular

'truths'. These ideas provide theoretical support for investigating the complex issues of oppression experienced by Indigenous students within the educational discourse. I will now explain the aspects of critical race theory I have selected to guide the analytical work of this study.

Critical Race Theory

While Foucault and Young offer important perspectives for understanding truth, power, injustice and inequality within my study, a more explicit focus on issues of race and whiteness is required. I have looked, therefore, to aspects of critical race theory (CRT) to bring to the foreground issues of race and whiteness in an attempt to offer a new way of addressing educational injustices experienced by Indigenous students. As my literature review has demonstrated, critical race theorising is quite prominent in the US (and to a certain extent in the UK as well) and there has been some engagement more recently with critical race studies in Australia. I have chosen, however, to work with some of the concepts from CRT in an Australian context both to investigate the possibilities for a stronger application of these ideas in this region and to propose that engagement with this body of theory may open new ways of looking at issues of race in education that go beyond the dominant frameworks of deficit, disadvantage and tokenistic inclusion.

CRT emerged in the US in the 1970s (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001:4) and was heavily influenced by the critical legal studies (CLS) movement, which criticised the omission of consideration of race within the legal system in the 1960s (Gewirtz and Cribb, 2009:62) and sought to identify values and norms that had been camouflaged within the law (Tate, 1997:197). CRT also engages with critical theory in sociology, history, ethnic studies, and women's studies (Yosso, 2006:168). Tate suggests it 'borrows' from many traditions and is 'characterized by a readiness to cross epistemological boundaries' (cited in Gillborn, 2006:22). CRT attempts to delve into the complexity of issues of race and racism, beginning importantly with making these issues visible and forcing them to be discussed and debated. Although race is foregrounded in this theory, CRT feminists have sought to draw attention to the experiences that emerge when race intersects with gender, class structures, sexuality and citizenship status (Zamudio et al., 2011:37), noting the great complexity of race issues and the many convergent influences on racial inequality.

Two key US theorists involved in the development of CRT in education are Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate. Ladson-Billings and Tate (2006) discuss the notion of race, the complexities of this concept, and the limitations of viewing it as either an 'ideological construct' or an 'objective condition' (p 571). They suggest the notion of 'race' is inherently problematic, however, its influence on society is significant and

despite the prominence of 'race' in US society, it remains, they argue, largely untheorised 'as a topic of scholarly inquiry in education' (Tate, 1997:196). British CRT scholar David Gillborn (2006) argues that CRT, therefore, attempts to expose how race and racism operate in contemporary western society (p 19), while Tate (1997) contends that there is a need to draw these issues into the educational research sphere,

These omissions and blind spots suggest the need for theoretical perspectives that move beyond the traditional paradigmatic boundaries of educational research to provide a more cogent analysis of "raced" people and move discussions of race and racism from the margins of scholarly activity to the fore of educational discourse. (p 196)

Gillborn (2006) suggests, therefore, the central focus of CRT is to propose that racism is ingrained in society and becomes 'normal, not aberrant' (p 20). CRT thus aims to shift the term racism to encompass more subtle and hidden 'operations of power' as well as the 'crude, obvious acts of race hatred' (Gillborn, 2006:20-21).

Part of this growing awareness of race has been the emergence of theorising about the idea of whiteness and white privilege, which is one of the key aspects of the application of CRT. I propose that this aspect could be particularly useful to analysis work in an Australian education context, as there has been limited work addressing this idea thus far, despite the possibilities it offers for understanding Indigenous experiences of education. Frankenberg (1997) helps to illuminate this notion of whiteness and its complexity by suggesting it is 'processes' that are plural rather than singular in nature and whiteness can be 'viewed as ensembles of local phenomena complexly embedded in socioeconomic, sociocultural, and psychic interrelations' (p 1). Leonardo also describes the nature of the idea of whiteness: "'Whiteness" is a racial discourse, whereas the category "white people" represents a socially constructed identity, usually based on skin color' (cited in Gillborn, 2009:54). This shift in thinking about race has started to expose whiteness as a form of power that has often been missing from conversations on race, which have predominantly been focused on 'the victim', the non-white. This focus on 'non-whites' has enabled whiteness to simultaneously be concealed and central or 'normal', maintaining oppression of the 'Other' and the gaze of the white perspective. CRT endeavours to expose this view of whiteness and analyse the relationship of whiteness to racism, oppression and power. Solorzano and Yosso (2009) suggest, 'a critical race theory challenges the traditional claims that educational institutions make toward objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity' (p 133). As Delgado and Stefancic (2001) point out, CRT is concerned not with objective truth, but with truth as a 'social construct, created to suit the purposes of a dominant group' (p 92), thus demonstrating connections with Foucault's work with the idea of 'truth'.

Storytelling is also a key feature of CRT and it is used to disrupt the historical silencing

of the voices of people of colour (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 2006:576). Further it is suggested that the 'naming of one's own reality with stories can affect the oppressor' (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 2006:576). This can act to dislodge the oppressor from a position of dominance and control. Although CRT relies heavily on storytelling and counter-storytelling to illustrate aspects of inequality, I will not be engaging this aspect of the theory in my analysis. I will instead be focusing on the ways whiteness finds dominance in educational policy discourse and how this inhibits the 'stories' of those perceived as 'Other'. This will be supported by Foucault's concepts of truth and normalisation and Young and Gerwitz's ideas of cultural imperialism and associational justice. Another key element of CRT is the idea of 'interest convergence', and in my analysis I will draw more heavily upon this concept. This notion was developed by Delgado who suggests 'white elites will tolerate or encourage racial advances for blacks only when such advances also promote white self-interest' (cited in Gillborn, 2006:25). This allows action to be taken against racial discrimination while maintaining a powerful white position and, as I demonstrate below, has particular relevance to my investigation.

Although CRT has made some important inroads into addressing racial inequality in education, there are some limitations and challenges associated with it. Rizvi (2009) warns of the need to be cautious, 'when theories are taken from the context of their development to another context' (p 366) as their defining features and functions have often grown out of particular issues related to their original context. This is true of CRT, which is strongly linked to the African-American experience of slavery and its effects, as well as a desire to extend the work of the civil rights movement in an effort to establish deep and authentic inclusion and participation (Rizvi, 2009:364). CRT has been criticised for romanticising 'blackness' and being US-centric (Gillborn, 2009, Rizvi, 2009:364, suggests it is in fact African American-centric), at the expense of experiences in other parts of the world (Gillborn, 2009:53). Gillborn (2009) also outlines Rosa Hernandez Sheets concern that 'there is a danger of whiteness studies colonizing and further de-radicalizing multicultural education' (p 53), which is an important concern to keep in mind in Australia, with its history of colonialism and immigration.

Frankenberg (1997) outlines some additional dangers of dealing with 'whiteness',

Why talk about whiteness, given the risk that by undertaking intellectual work on whiteness one might contribute to processes of recentering rather than decentering it, as well as reifying the term and its "inhabitants"? (p 1)

It is important to remain conscious of these risks as well as the potential to simplify matters of race and culture and slip into forms of theorising that further polarise positions.

In an Australian context and for the purposes of this study it is also important to recognise the vast variation in both Indigeneity and Indigenous experiences of racism and whiteness. Added to this complexity is the impact of non-white and non-Indigenous experiences and perspectives, including those of immigrants and refugees, which produce complex relationships around issues of racism and ethnicity in Australia. Recognition of the complexity of issues to do with Indigeneity is missing from the majority of work emerging from a CRT framework; however, in my view this does not diminish the possibilities for working with this theory and indeed gives added impetus to the need for such work. If CRT can help shed light on issues of race and whiteness that impede and inhibit Indigenous educational justice, this may allow space for more complex and specific Indigenous theories and knowledges to be better utilised and applied within this discourse. Further I suggest that there is value in using a body of theory developed largely by scholars of colour, even considering the criticisms leveled at it for various reasons, including lack of analytical rigour (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001:87-95), and being US-centric (Rizvi, 2009, Gillborn, 2009), as it acknowledges the value of reading issues of racial oppression through a lens developed by non-whites. CRT brings to the academy a challenge to what is considered valuable knowledge and theory within the powerful Western framework. I believe researchers have a responsibility to engage with this challenge and apply an 'analytical language' developed by those who have experienced racial oppression in an effort to encourage more open conversations around race and racism.

Frankenberg (1997) also suggests that although there are risks in dealing with whiteness, 'there are also tremendous risks in not critically engaging whiteness' (p 1). Critical race and whiteness theorising, therefore, creates the challenge of exposing power and inequality through the interrogation of whiteness, which, as I argue here, is urgently needed in Australian education policy. However, in so doing, we must remember not to lose sight of the complexity and diversity of race and experiences of racial discrimination that exist within this realm. The decision to complement my use of aspects of CRT with some of the work of Foucault and Young, attempts to address these complexities and provide opportunities for a more nuanced analysis of Indigenous educational achievement.

Methodological Approach

Methodology

The methodology used in the study can be described broadly as critical analysis of policy discourses. The variations in method that fall under this umbrella are many and draw from a vast range of theories, disciplines and traditions. My methodological approach to critically analyse policy is influenced by Foucauldian conceptions of

discourse and by traditions within critical policy research.

Discourse

It has been widely acknowledged that Foucault resisted classification theoretically (O'Farrell, 2005:9, Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983:xviii) as well as methodologically (O'Farrell, 2005:50, Graham, 2011:663) and therefore his work is usually seen to provide no definitive methodological guidance. However his work has been drawn upon by poststructuralist researchers (Olssen, 2003), and elements of his theorising have been adapted to establish methodological guidance (Graham, 2011, O'Farrell, 2005, Butin, 2006). For example, following Foucault's account of 'truths' as contested (1980:131-133), his conception of critique is perhaps one of illumination rather than discovery,

Criticism is a matter of flushing out that thought (which animates everyday behaviour) and trying to change it: to show that things are not as self-evident as one believed, to see that what is accepted as self-evident will no longer be accepted as such...as soon as one can no longer think things as one formerly thought them, transformation becomes both very urgent, very difficult and quite possible. (Foucault cited in Ball, 1995:268)

Thus this approach is not so much about proving something but disproving and destabilising what is considered natural and normal. Graham (2011), therefore, suggests that, 'discourse analysis informed by Foucauldian or other poststructuralist theory endeavours to avoid the substitution of one 'truth' for another' (p 665-666). Furthermore, 'the aim of poststructural analysis is not to establish a final 'truth' but to question the intelligibility of truth/s we have come to take for granted' (p 666). This also means an understanding of how truths are accepted or knowledge produced cannot be divorced from an understanding of the exercise of power (Humes and Bryce, 2003:179). Working with discourse in this form of analysis therefore is complex and layered. This is partly due to Foucault's breaking with tradition in his conception of the meaning of discourse. He notes, 'I am well aware that most of these definitions do not conform with current usage: linguists usually give the word discourse a quite different meaning; logicians and analysts use the term statement in a different way' (Foucault, 1989:121). But in regard to his notion of discourse, Foucault observes: 'I believe I have in fact added to its meanings: treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a certain number of statements' (cited in Titscher et al., 2000:25).

Those following this multifarious concept of discourse, therefore, are concerned with discourse as 'a matter of convention *and* content' (Leonardo, 2003:207, original emphasis). In attempting to unpack this further, Graham (2011) suggests, 'words on the

page, utterances, symbols and signs, statements: *these* are the start and end point for the poststructural discourse analyst' (p 666, original emphasis). She also points to the ethical dimensions of this approach, proposing that greater insight can be gained from the destination of a text as opposed to its beginning and therefore, 'one looks to statements not so much for what they say but what they *do*' (p 667, original emphasis). She suggests discourse analysis using Foucault, as opposed to critical discourse analysis (CDA), focuses less on the micro elements of the text, the 'structural/grammatical/linguistic/semiotic features that make up the text' (p 671) and more on the macro or 'what is 'made up' by the text itself' (p 671). This correlates with the intentions of critical race methodology in education, which Solorzano and Yosso (2009) suggest,

Challenges traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of people of color. It exposes deficit-informed research and methods that silence and distort the experiences of people of color and instead focus on their racialized, gendered, and classed experiences as sources of strength' (p 133-134)

Discourse analysis also seeks to disrupt the perceived naturalness of identities and values and expose the power within 'seemingly innocent' texts (MacLure, 2003:9). The aim of exposing and illuminating particular elements of discourses that have become 'normal', Wetherell (1998) explains, also endeavours to 'render strange usual or habitual ways of making sense, to locate these sense-making methods historically and to interrogate their relation to power' (p 394). Thus the aim of this approach is to delve deeply into the effects of 'discourses'.

Graham (2011) selects three important ideas from Foucault's work which she believes are useful in guiding discourse analysis from a Foucauldian perspective: description, recognition and classification (p 668-672). Her use of these three concepts as a guide for analysis can be summarised as follows:

- Description is important to trace the relationship between words and things, to seek to understand how the words used to communicate produce the objects of which we speak. This involves defining and situating 'statements' as 'function', the place in which 'words and things intersect and become invested with particular relations of power, resulting in an interpellative event' (p 668).
- Recognition involves the illumination of specific bodies of knowledge that create a situation in which 'statements' are recognised and validated. It is the illumination of how 'certain statements build a discourse that reaffirms not only that particular perception of phenomena and the way it is described, but also outlines the specific and technical expertise required to deal with it' (p 670).
- Classification requires identifying and following discursive traces that lead to the knowledge domain upon which the 'statement' depends for its 'intelligibility' or

claim to 'truth'. It also involves revealing other statements from that particular discursive sphere which together, work to sustain this discourse (p 671).

Graham (2011) argues that although this approach to analysis is not considered 'scientific' it can be powerful in enabling 'researchers to think and see otherwise', to 'imagine things being other than what they are' and to 'understand the abstract and concrete links that make them so' (p 666). She suggests, therefore, that this work can make important conceptual contributions to the research field (p 666).

Critical Policy Analysis

Analysis of discourse guided by Foucault has direct links to the methodological guidance I will draw from critical policy analysis. I turn to a body of work that addresses the socio-cultural 'effects' of policy rather than policy implementation research (Bowe et al., 1992:2). This approach, therefore, seeks to expose the shape, contours and texture of policy, to interrogate the policy and 'regimes of truth' inherent in it. Ozga (2000) suggests policy research of this nature has an important role in questioning the assumptions of policy makers and enabling policy research in education to be a place of scrutiny and debate (p 8). She notes that this form of policy research leads to the use of critical theory in questioning how and why a particular 'order' is present (Ozga, 2000:45-46) and carries with it certain ethical and social justice implications and responsibilities (p 46).

Many critical policy researchers have described policy as 'the authoritative allocation of values' (Lingard, 2010:132, Kogan et al., 2006:46, Ball, 1990b:3). In this sense, policy texts are appropriate sources to examine in order to identify and analyse the types of dominant values informing educational discourse and practice, and to explore the effects they may have on Indigenous achievement. Ball (1990b) also suggests that 'discourse provides a particular and pertinent way of understanding policy formation' (p 22). This demonstrates the ways in which discourses and policy may establish an interdependent relationship, both influencing and being influenced by each other. He also calls for educational research that is closely linked to theory (Ball, 1995). He argues that the use of particular critical theories can help in challenging dominant ideas, suggesting,

Theory is a vehicle for 'thinking otherwise'; it is a platform for 'outrageous hypotheses' and for 'unleashing criticism'. Theory is destructive, disruptive and violent. It offers a language for challenge, and modes of thought, other than those articulated for us by dominant others. It provides a language of rigour and irony rather than contingency. The purpose of such theory is to de-familiarize present practices and categories, to make them seem less self-evident and necessary, and to open up spaces for invention of new forms of experience. (Ball, 1995:266)

Ball's account of the 'uses of theory' for doing research is supported, but with caution,

by Humes and Bryce (2003). Although inspired by Ball's notion, they are concerned about whether such an approach is sufficient when faced with the pragmatic challenges commonly presented by education policy (p 184-185). They suggest Flyvbjerg (2001) offers useful possibilities to complement Ball's challenge. Flyvbjerg contends that critical social analysis should be 'done in the public for the public, sometimes to clarify, sometimes to intervene, sometimes to generate new perspectives, and always to serve as eyes and ears in our ongoing efforts at understanding the present and deliberating about the future' (cited in Humes and Bryce, 2003:182). He believes research efforts in this area should concentrate on local, national and global problems that matter to the people experiencing the problems and issues should focus on 'values and power' (Flyvberg cited in Humes and Bryce, 2003:182). Flyvberg further argues that 'the results of such research enquiries must be communicated effectively to all citizens, not just to the privileged members of the academic community' (cited in Humes and Bryce, 2003:182).

Ozga (2000) also emphasizes that it is important to 'understand education policy in a theoretically informed way' (p 42). She suggests theory should be used as a tool for questioning in an open and self-conscious way, which helps prevent research being undertaken to demonstrate correctness and also prevents creating an accumulation of evidence that doesn't tell a story (2000:44). She also notes that social science/critical theory projects in education policy research are vulnerable to pressure from an economising agenda on the processes of policy formation (2000:73). Critical analysis of policy is therefore interested in challenging dominant agendas that influence policy through analysing and interrogating the values guiding policy formation.

The methodological approach I have adopted is oriented to understanding relations of power and values, to illuminating and challenging particular 'truths' and to opening new possibilities for working with concerns of equity, race and difference in education. This approach has been selected to better understand the complexities of Indigenous education and achievement in the context of widespread education policy commitment to inclusion and equity. This methodology, therefore, guides my study to seek to expose some of the barriers and silences inherent in the current discourse of education in Australia.

Study Design

This study has been designed to explore the 'problem' of Indigenous disadvantage and inclusion in education with the intention of creating opportunities for new ways of looking at and addressing disadvantage and inclusion. It has been guided by a reading of the literature that suggests Indigenous educational disadvantage has become ingrained and that policies designed to address this disadvantage and include Indigenous people, their

perspectives and experiences in the education system, have consistently failed. In seeking, then, to address these issues, the theoretical and methodological perspectives outlined above offer challenges to the way we read disadvantage and inclusion and what this illuminates about the discourse to which they belong.

The study, therefore, takes an official element of educational discourse – policy documents, reports addressing policies and standardised national tests that grow out of policy – and analyses these using the theories outlined and guided by the combined methodological approach described above.

The selection of documents I have chosen to work with in chapter three are concerned specifically with the education of Indigenous students:

- *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators Report 2009*,
- *Contextual Factors that influence the achievement of Australia's Indigenous students: Results from PISA 2000-2006*,
- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010-2014* and,
- *Wannik: Education Strategy for Koorie Students 2008*.

In chapter four I will work with the following documents that address education and social inclusion more generally:

- *National Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*,
- *Values for Australian Schooling* poster,
- grade three and five National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests from 2009 and 2010,
- the *Queensland School Planning, Reviewing and Reporting Framework 2011*,
- the *Northern Territory School Accountability and Performance Improvement Framework*,
- the *Victorian Blueprint, Supporting School Improvement: Transparency and Accountability in Victorian Government Schools* and,
- the *Western Australian School Improvement and Accountability Framework*.

These documents have been selected for their comparative possibilities, enabling comparison between different ways of viewing and understanding the 'Indigenous student' and comparison between the intentions and effects of Indigenous specific policy and broader education policies and practices. Comparison is also intended in a number of other ways. National and state based policies will be compared to capture the tensions and lines of connection that emerge related to context. Policies (including 'frameworks' and 'action plans' which are connected to policies) and documents developed out of policies, such as reports and standardised, high-stakes tests, will be compared to illuminate the ways in which these different elements of official documentation guide and support similar intentions.

I have chosen, against convention, to first address the documents relating specifically to Indigenous students rather than to students 'in general'. When addressing the 'problem' of Indigenous education, researchers and policy seems to always start with the Indigenous student. I, therefore, will begin here also. This is to draw attention to this starting point in an attempt to question why this is always the starting point and what effect this has on Indigenous achievement. It also enables insight into how Indigenous students are perceived within the discourse and provides a context for the work of the following chapter, which addresses ideas of what constitutes the successful student and how Indigenous students are positioned within or outside this discourse.

The documents will be analysed using the following guiding questions:

- How does policy and reporting position the Indigenous student?
- How is disadvantage framed and addressed?
- How is inclusion proposed?
- What opportunities do these conceptions of disadvantage and inclusion create or deny for these students?
- What insights do new ways of looking at disadvantage and inclusion give on the presence and effects of dominance and privilege?
- Are Indigenous students visible in broader educational policy and generic testing?
- What are the attributes that are considered necessary for success in the education system and how does this impact Indigenous achievement?

As this is a small-scale study there are limitations according to the breadth of material possible to work with and therefore the depth of insight available. It is hoped, however, that this study may reveal insight into how educational discourses operate to produce and sustain inequalities and to enable further work to be carried out to reveal more thoroughly the ways in which a different reading of disadvantage may contribute to better educational experiences for Indigenous students. It is also acknowledged that this study may serve to uncover my own power, privilege and bias as a white person working within a system rooted in a western knowledge tradition, for as Said suggests, 'intellectuals represent something to their audiences, and in so doing represent themselves to themselves' (cited in Ayers, 2006:85).

Conclusion

The theoretical and methodological choices of this study have been made in an attempt to enable critical insight into a complex and diverse field of investigation. This complexity and diversity calls for a study design that meets these attributes and, therefore, a range of theories, and a layered methodological approach and a comparative study design have been selected to support and guide this work. Elements

of Foucault's work both inspire the methodological approach and support the analysis theoretically. This, along with aspects of Young's theorising around difference within social justice, provides a foundation for analysis guided predominantly by ideas from within critical race theory. The study will explore the discourse of education through critical engagement with elements of policy, reporting and testing related to Indigenous people specifically and also the broader student body. It has been designed with comparative purpose to uncover the silences that tend to embody the attempts to achieve educational equality for Indigenous students.

Chapter Three

Conceptions of the Indigenous Student

Introduction

Colonial history and a range of social and educational policies have shaped the ways Indigenous peoples in Australia experience education and are positioned in educational discourses. An historical understanding of oppression and power is advocated in each of the theories I am engaging in this study. CRT aims to challenge ahistoricism and analyse race and racism by 'placing them in both historical and contemporary contexts' (Solorzano and Yosso, 2009:134). Foucault asserts, 'it is one of my targets to show people that a lot of things that are part of their landscape – that people think are universal – are the result of some very precise historical changes' (cited in O'Farrell, 2005:61). And Young (1990) suggests new forms of oppression have 'continuities and discontinuities with past structures' (p 131). She also points out that bias can be embedded in institutions through designs that privileged the powerful or through structures that contain remnants of practices that have now been formally outlawed (1990:197). The ways in which Indigenous peoples are viewed and positioned today has echoes in history. This history is part of the context for the analysis developed in this chapter. It is important in establishing a deeper understanding of the nature of oppression (Young, 1990:65) and the ways in which Indigenous students are viewed, catered for and understood in educational discourse today. I will, therefore, briefly outline below some significant episodes that illustrate the historical tensions between difference and sameness in relation to race relations and Indigenous education in Australia to set the scene for the analysis to follow.

According to historian, Anna Haebich (2008), white ways of thinking, behaving, interacting, knowing and governing were believed to be superior and enduring during the 19th and 20th centuries. Throughout the 19th century and the early years of Federation Indigenous peoples were regarded as a doomed race (McGregor, 1997, Reynolds, 2001) and routinely removed from their traditional lands (Haebich, 2008:70). Meanwhile the *White Australia Policy*, instituted in 1901 (Palfreman, 1967:5), blatantly excluded non-White immigration. But as Haebich (2008) points out, this 'race-based model of White Australia became increasingly untenable from the late 1940s' (p 81), and therefore, had to make way for the 'softer' policy of assimilation in which cultural homogeneity was emphasized (p 81). The basis of assimilation had been being practised in various forms, particularly on Aborigines, throughout the 1800s (Reynolds, 2001:158-9). In the 1950s and 60s, however, it took on an air of generosity, in which white Australia welcomed refugees, immigrants and Aborigines into the perceived culturally superior Anglo lifestyle so as to build a strong 'white' nation (Haebich, 2008:198-9). Whiteness, therefore, was a grounding principle in Australia's colonial

origins.

This core aim of assimilation, to deny the existence of difference, influenced the education domain. This is evident in educational practice, as outlined by Groome (1998) in his discussion of schools of the 19th and early 20th centuries in which Indigenous cultures and languages were denied existence (p 172). Marginson's (1997b) account of the Australian Council for Educational Research conferences of 1937, in which, 'speakers covered almost every subject, though little was said about the education of girls, and less about indigenous and cultural diversity' (p 245) also notes unease with difference. Education of Indigenous people in the 1930s in fact demonstrates a belief that it was impossible to assimilate Aborigines, as illustrated by anthropologist, A.K. Elkin's comments in 1937 in the journal *Oceania*,

The present policy is to educate aborigines (mostly mixed-bloods) up to what might be called a 'useful labourer's standard', for to do more, if it were possible, would not help them...aborigines (full and mixed blood) should not, and can not, be assimilated by the white community. They must live apart...they cannot become equals of the white race. (cited in Gray, 2008:205)

Such views had shifted by the 1960s to the assumption that Aboriginal people must become 'white', as evident in Tatz's explanation of the political climate at the time in *Aboriginal education: the teacher's role*,

The fundamental assumption is that the Australian state educational systems and their values should be taught to Aborigines: one must teach the Aborigine how to become a white Australian, then teach him a trade, and then expect achievement in the white Australian sense of the term. (Tatz, 1969:6)

By the 1970s the government became aware of the need to recognise cultural diversity rather than try and nullify it (Rizvi, 1993:121). Assimilation was, therefore, a policy deemed incapable of adequately serving migrant needs or addressing migrant unrest (Rizvi, 1993:121-2), paving the way for establishment of the policy of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism was framed in more inclusive tones, being open to and welcoming difference. This is evident in Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser's speech in 1981 when he states diversity is a 'source of wealth and dynamism' (cited in Haebich, 2008:181). But while there was rhetorical support for difference, supporting it in practice proved more difficult in a society still heavily rooted in Anglo-centric institutions and ideology (Rizvi, 1993:123).

The centrality of social cohesion as a goal within the policy of multiculturalism in which diverse ethnic groups are allowed to celebrate their cultural traditions is highlighted in the Australian Council of Population and Ethnic Affairs 1982 report, *Multiculturalism for All Australians* (Rizvi, 1991:166). This report outlines the important role of the school system in 'providing a common body of knowledge that forms part of what it means to

have an Australian culture' and 'an opportunity for shared experiences between children of different cultural backgrounds' (cited in Rizvi, 1991:167). This demonstrates persistent discomfort with how to 'address' difference and a continuing pull towards commonality and a single 'Australian culture'. An interesting paradox, however, is that the idea of white superiority was discussed openly and often in relation to the *White Australia Policy* and assimilation, yet there had now developed a prominent discomfort with the notion of whiteness in Australia. When people became aware of the overt racism practised in the early days of colonial Australia, and with the advent of the policy of multiculturalism, whiteness as an identity and political category almost completely disappeared from official and public discourse.

The above discussion demonstrates some of the ways 'racial' and cultural difference has been encountered in Australia, shifting from a place of complete rejection within white supremacist motives to a desire to include and incorporate difference within multiculturalism. It is evident that anti-racist intentions have found a way into the educational landscape, however, critical race theory provides a challenge to delve further than intentions and interrogate the way in which racism may remain embedded in institutions (Gillborn, 2006:15). This chapter encompasses two sections: 'Indigenous Students as Disadvantaged' and 'Indigenous Students as Included'. The first will explore the way policy constructions of disadvantage tend to place Indigenous students in a deficit position and offer remedies for these deficits based on what is seen to be successful for non-Indigenous students. The second section focuses on the idea of inclusion and examines the way this creates possibilities for justice; however, currently power tends to remain with 'whiteness' thus inhibiting concerted participation of those deemed 'different', or as 'Other' than white.

Indigenous Students as Disadvantaged

As demonstrated by a reading of the literature concerned with Indigenous students, disadvantage is commonly cited and debated, and calls abound for such disadvantage to be addressed. In this section I will examine the most recent report from the program *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators* (Banks, 2009)¹ to explore the notion of disadvantage and some of the implications of this conception for Indigenous students. This Commonwealth report is presented every two years and the 2009 report addresses six Council of Australian Governments (COAG) targets aimed to 'close the gap' on Indigenous disadvantage across a range of facets of life. Chapter six of the report refers to 'Education and Training', where I will focus my attention, along with the introduction of the report. I will also consider an Australian Council for Educational

¹ The latest *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* report was released on 25th August 2011, just prior to this thesis being submitted.

Research (ACER) report, *Contextual Factors that influence the achievement of Australia's Indigenous students: Results from PISA 2000-2006*, published in 2010, which addresses Indigenous educational achievement in relation to international standards. These reports both frame Indigenous students as disadvantaged. And although this is important to acknowledge and it must not be denied, this construction can place Indigenous students in a position in which they are seen to be 'without' and in need of being remedied. This can, I propose, produce particular barriers for participation and create a power relationship between those who name the disadvantage and those deemed disadvantaged.

Analysis of 'Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators' Report

The discourse on Aboriginal education has definitely changed since Elkin's assertions of 1937 (cited in Gray, 2008:205) with it now being acknowledged that, 'there is little if any gap in cognitive ability between young Indigenous and non-Indigenous children' (Banks, 2009:16). It is noted however that, 'a gap in school performance is evident as early as year 1' and 'this gap widens over time, and as the degree of remoteness increases' (Banks, 2009:16). The way in which disadvantage is found to increase as students progress through school and if they are living in a more remote location is significant and addressed again later in the report (Banks, 2009:6.8). A number of further factors are identified as contributing to disadvantage, including family background, school resourcing, class size, student motivation and ability (Banks, 2009:6.8) and teacher quality (Banks, 2009:6.9).

A study by Marks (2007) is drawn upon to explain some of the reasons students may leave school after year nine or ten: 'Other significant factors associated with early school leaving include the socioeconomic background of the students, coming from non-metropolitan areas, and students living in non-traditional families' (Banks, 2009:6.16). In Marks' study, early school leaving is associated with living in family situations different to a 'two-biological parent family' (Marks, 2007:441). Reference to 'non-traditional families' is therefore related to families different from the nuclear family, setting the nuclear family as the 'traditional' or norm. This is not explained in the *Overcoming Disadvantage* report, demonstrating the way a particular type of family is positioned as the norm, and then implied that this configuration is necessary for reducing disadvantage. This suggests a culture of whiteness has been positioned as the norm and is the 'standard against which other groups are compared' (Tate, 1997:199), contributing to the positioning of whiteness as a powerful and normalising 'truth'.

The remedies proposed for disadvantage in this report, then, tend to encourage students and families to assimilate into the system that supports and acknowledges this dominant lifestyle, or to force attendance through measures such as tying welfare

payments to student attendance or creating programs that are not available to those with a poor school attendance record (Banks, 2009:6.4-6.5). This illustrates a lack of awareness of dominance of a 'white' experience within the education system and a reform agenda that, although concerned with disadvantage and revoking it, tends to place responsibility on the 'disadvantaged' to change and adapt to suit the dominant system. Negative sanctions are applied to help enforce 'normative' behaviour and change those deemed deviant. This is also illustrative of Foucault's theory of normalisation in which he suggested those deemed outside the norm had to be 'trained', 'corrected' and 'normalized' (Jones, 1990:97). There is also evidence here of what Foucault identified as the 'disciplinary power of normalisation' in which rewards are given for good behaviour (Jones, 1990:96), such as the privileges made available for those students who attend school regularly (Banks, 2009:6.4-6.5).

There are two measures presented that offer a move away from the student and their family as the centre for change. These are the development of Indigenous cultural studies (Banks, 2009:6.2) and improvement of teacher quality (Banks, 2009:6.9). Both of these measures, however, are stated to have limited data available to use in analysing their impact (Banks, 2009:6.8, 6.11), which illustrates the early stage of their conception as factors in addressing disadvantage. It is suggested in the report that 'culturally appropriate education for Indigenous students can contribute to good 'mainstream' academic outcomes, as well as consolidating community teachings and knowledge' (Banks, 2009:6.2). There is some suggestion here that Indigenous knowledge and perspectives are important and the literature reviewed in chapter one shows a growing body of Indigenous knowledge research, demonstrating the increased value this area is attracting. This helps draw it from a marginalised position into one of more prominence. The acknowledgment that cultural knowledge assists in improving 'mainstream' academic outcomes is important, however, I argue that it also places 'mainstream' academic outcomes as the pinnacle of achievement and the more important element, while cultural knowledge is seen to help support this. There is also mention that 'a quarter of schools had no Indigenous students in 2007' (Banks, 2009:6.11), adding to the suggestion that culture and cultural knowledge can be used as an addition to support Indigenous students to learn because it is particular to them rather than it being valuable knowledge for living in the world. This, therefore, reinforces the higher value of 'mainstream' academic knowledge.

It is also reported that COAG has initiated 'reforms aimed at improving teacher and school leader quality for all students, and in particular, for students in disadvantaged Indigenous, rural/remote and hard to staff schools' (Banks, 2009:6.8). This shift in focus begins to open opportunities for Indigenous students to be valued and humanised, rather than sculpted to fit a particular system of engagement and achievement. The

report states, however, that research indicates, 'teacher quality depends not only on the quality of the people in the teaching profession, but also their initial teacher education, their continuing professional development, and their work practices and working environment' (Banks, 2009:6.8). This suggests teacher education and professional development privileges knowledge related to teaching in particular contexts and teachers have greater success in particular working environments. As it is Indigenous students who are 'failing' I argue this shows that the current teacher education system and working environments privilege a 'white' perspective – a legacy of their colonial beginnings.

The notion of Indigenous cultural studies in this report is an example of Young's (1990) concept of cultural imperialism, in which universalisation of the dominant group's experience and culture is established as the norm (p 59). She suggests cultural imperialism has particular effects, which include minority cultures finding themselves, 'defined from the outside, positioned, placed, by a network of dominant meanings they experience as arising from elsewhere' (p 59). This is evident in the conception of culture in this report, which is positioned and defined by the dominant group.

Improved teacher quality in this report is an example of what CRT conceptualises as color blindness in which individual political rights, or in this case access to 'quality teaching', is seen to translate into equality, without acknowledging the 'embedded institutional nature of racial inequality' (Zamudio et al., 2011:19). Zamudio et al (2011) explain how this concept commonly operates, suggesting,

The notion of colorblindness assumes that racism only operates as a consequence of political rights and the laws that govern them. It fails to consider the extent that society is racialized both interpersonally and institutionally. (p 22)

In this report it is suggested quality teaching, improved professional development and quality work environments will sufficiently solve the problems of Indigenous under-achievement (Banks, 2009:6.8). Although these elements are certainly important, my analysis has pointed to the effects of colorblindness and cultural imperialism, which can inhibit the success of these factors.

I will now analyse the Program for International Student Achievement (PISA) report, which assesses Indigenous disadvantage related to global measures.

Analysis of 'Contextual Factors that influence the achievement of Australia's Indigenous students: Results from PISA 2000-2006'

The ways in which Indigenous disadvantage is positioned in the global educational discourse reveals a number of patterns and the prominence of particular values. The *PISA report on contextual factors that influence the achievement of Australia's*

Indigenous students (de Bortoli and Thomson, 2010) outlines the 'disparity' in educational outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students (de Bortoli and Thomson, 2010:1), highlighting the 'substantially and statistically lower average level in reading, mathematical and scientific literacy' of Indigenous students (de Bortoli and Thomson, 2010:2). The report further suggests that 'The OECD considers that mathematics, science and technology are sufficiently pervasive in modern life that personal fulfillment, employment, and full participation in society increasingly require an adult population which is not only able to read and write, but is also mathematically, scientifically and technologically literate' (de Bortoli and Thomson, 2010:4). PISA, as well as the COAG targets, focus on the testing of English literacy and mathematical literacy (PISA also assesses scientific literacy) (de Bortoli and Thomson, 2010:4), suggesting some forms of knowledge are more valuable than others.

This raises questions about a hierarchy of knowledge and what other factors are 'pervasive' in our society such that non-Indigenous participants in PISA tests achieve better results than Indigenous students. CRT is based on an argument that 'whiteness' is also a 'pervasive' factor in modern life and that this means students who are considered 'different' are likely to be positioned as deficient. Ladson-Billings (2009) asserts that CRT sees 'the official school curriculum as a culturally-specific artifact designed to maintain a White supremacist master script' (p 29). In this report (de Bortoli and Thomson, 2010), I suggest we can see the prevailing influence of such a 'master script' being applied through the globalising education discourse which systematically privileges particular knowledge, rendering other knowledge less valuable. Those who then fail to perform well in proving an understanding of the 'master script' are seen generally as failing. A label of deficiency is thus attached to these 'failing' students, which I argue, is disempowering in multiple ways. It acts to devalue the knowledge they have that is not recognised as important (for example, Indigenous knowledge, community knowledge); limit their capacity to gain Western knowledge uninhibited by the discourse of failure, which is inherently disempowering; and set a pathway to success that is singular and requires particular attributes, which become 'normalised'. These students are therefore, I contend, expected to uncritically accept the master script or master narrative as 'truth' (Zamudio et al., 2011:124-125). Foucault's theory of the power of particular 'regimes of truth' in society (1980:131) is also helpful here for understanding how certain ways of thinking become authorised as commonsense, such that the 'master script' becomes accepted as the self-evident 'truth'.

In suggesting Western knowledge is a powerful 'master script' I do not want to downplay the ways in which access to this knowledge can be empowering and should be unequivocally available to Indigenous people. As Nakata (2007b) points out, talking of Torres Strait Islanders, Western knowledge systems are important for Indigenous

peoples for a number of reasons,

Islanders have called for an education not simply so we gain benefits from it. It is so that we can gauge and understand the external influences in our lives, what it is we are up against, and what it means for our survival in colonial environments. (p 169)

What Nakata points to here, however, is knowledge of power, within this knowledge system. The 'master script' or 'external influences' are, therefore, not just accepted but become known, understood and, where necessary, challenged. It is, I argue, the uncritical, assimilationist push of education (in Western knowledge) as a panacea for disadvantage that is a concern.

This report also states 'one of the aims of education is to provide students with opportunities in their lives, and it is important that students and their parents understand the impact of their choices' and that 'school systems can and should have a role in furthering this understanding' (de Bortoli and Thomson, 2010:iii). The ways in which value can be placed on particular pathways and choices, without interrogation of whether this is a genuine choice for these students is, I believe, evident in this statement. It also implies that Indigenous people are negating the opportunities school offers through choosing not to attend. The fault, therefore, is placed upon Indigenous people rather than recognising that they may not be able to access the opportunities afforded through school for other reasons and school may not be a very appealing or even safe choice for them if their identities and experiences are denied or derided. This is another example of colorblindness, as discussed above, in which people simply being given political rights or 'choices' are seen as equal, without consideration of how particular ingrained racial discrimination may inhibit these choices (Zamudio et al., 2011:19-22). Young (1990) suggests this is a common form of oppression in which difference is constructed by the dominant culture as 'lack or negation' as it is posed against the normality of their own culture (p 59). The lack of acknowledgement of the impact of race and whiteness on choices seen here also leads to an understanding of achievement and participation based on merit, where choices and knowledge are constructed as free of value or neutral. This requires structures and evaluation to be perceived as 'normatively and culturally neutral' (Young, 1990:193) and acts to mask the effects of institutions 'constructed along the status lines of class, race, gender and citizenship' (Zamudio et al., 2011:16).

Key findings of this report regarding home and educational background reveal that Indigenous people's circumstances often don't align with what is considered the mainstream or 'norm' (de Bortoli and Thomson, 2010:10). Aspects such as lower levels of educational attainment of Indigenous parents, Indigenous students having fewer material items related to family wealth and fewer educational resources are noted in this report as factors in Indigenous student disadvantage (de Bortoli and Thomson,

2010:10). Indigenous students were also reported to be more likely to live in family situations different to a 'nuclear' family arrangement (de Bortoli and Thomson, 2010:15). The report also presents key findings concerning Indigenous students' 'attitudes, engagement, motivation and beliefs' (de Bortoli and Thomson, 2010:27) and outlines their 'significantly lower levels' of interest and engagement in reading and science (de Bortoli and Thomson, 2010:27). This includes 'appreciation of science from both a general and personal perspective', 'instrumental motivation in science', self-efficacy from a 'general view point' and in mathematics and science, and in mathematics and science self-concept (de Bortoli and Thomson, 2010:27).

Both the key findings noted above give insight into possible reasons for disadvantage. These are important to identify and recognise, however, it is what is implied from these findings that I argue is problematic. This report appears to suggest that many Indigenous students' current circumstances prevent them from achieving, and the only way in which they have a chance of achievement is to alter their circumstances. Again, this places non-Indigenous students as the norm and Indigenous students outside of this and needing to assimilate into this way of behaving and being in order to lift themselves out of the disadvantage they experience. It also has disempowering and derisive effects, leading to a belief that there are no positive aspects to Indigenous students' backgrounds and circumstances. It is not my contention to dismiss 'background' and 'attitudes' as important factors in achievement but to question the ways in which these factors are used to classify, 'Other' and normalise, and the effects these usages may in fact have on achievement. This issue has concerned Comber (1998), who poses the question, 'If our research is indeed motivated by social justice how might we foreground material disadvantage without unleashing normative moral discourses which pathologise disadvantaged communities and reduce children to amalgams of categories?' (p 7). This question is, I suggest, vitally important to the issues raised here regarding the ways in which factors in Indigenous students lives are used to explain their disadvantage and the remedies that are proposed according to these factors.

The focus in this report (de Bortoli and Thomson, 2010) tends to be on sameness and Indigenous students need to catch up with their non-Indigenous. This demonstrates an assimilationist and 'corrective' approach to addressing the disadvantage. Indigenous students are thus seen as 'deficient' and the 'right strategy or technique' is required to deal with this 'at risk' group, demonstrating the ways they are typically 'cast in a language of failure' (Ladson-Billings, 2009:29-30). It also illustrates the ways this discourse aims to reduce 'gaps', Foucault (1977) suggesting a focus on gaps is 'essentially *corrective*' (original emphasis, p 179). The descriptions of disadvantage and proposed remedies in this report also display undertones of the idea of 'interest

convergence' in which advances for non-whites are acceptable as long as they also promote white self-interest (Gillborn, 2006:25). They are shown to be attending to the plight of Indigenous students, however, are still focused on the safety and security of 'whites' (Zamudio et al., 2011:35) by making the least amount of change that might impact this powerful majority.

Analysis of the two reports (Banks, 2009, de Bortoli and Thomson, 2010) in this section reveals a particular framing of the Indigenous student as disadvantaged, in which the measures of achievement are predominantly based on Eurocentric conceptions of the non-Indigenous achiever. Indigenous students are, therefore, expected to take on the attributes of their non-Indigenous counterparts in order to shift themselves from a place of disadvantage to one of achievement. There is no suggestion of the ways in which remedies for disadvantage could vary to better serve students from a different experience. Remedies are instead stated as universal, neutral and value-free, with factors seen to benefit non-Indigenous students being applied to Indigenous students creating 'normalisation' of whiteness. These reports also demonstrate the ways in which Indigenous people are commonly reported on by those who assess their situation from a particular reading of the world. While there may be 'consultation' (Banks, 2009:9) with Indigenous people, it seems they are rarely given power to assess disadvantage or propose approaches to encourage achievement, instead needing to 'support' or 'endorse' proposed measures (Banks, 2009:9). If we move from this conception of disadvantage to a reading of advantage, we see that non-Indigenous students are advantaged by their experiences correlating more closely with what is valued, how it is achieved and how their attitudes, engagement, motivations and self-belief is articulated and understood.

In the following section I will assess the other common way of conceiving of Indigenous students, as that of 'included'. I will look at the ways this conception connects with that of 'disadvantage' and at the same time attempts to move away from the deficit conception 'disadvantage' encourages.

Indigenous Students as Included

Recent policies addressing Indigenous education indicate a shift in discursive construction of the Indigenous student. Although still engaging with the discourse of disadvantage, these documents also address explicitly the idea of social and educational inclusion and offer ways in which this intention should be enacted. I have chosen to focus in this section on a national plan, the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010-2014*, and a Victorian state strategy, *Wannik: Education Strategy for Koorie Students 2008*. Both these documents deal with

inclusion, but do so quite differently. I have chosen to compare these documents to illuminate the tensions and possibilities of the approach of 'inclusion'. In the *Wannik* strategy, Indigenous people are referred to as Koorie, which is a collective name often given to the many different Indigenous groups from the south east of Australia.

Analysis of 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010-2014'

This *Action Plan* acknowledges that, 'gaps remain between the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and other students with evidence from across Australia showing that the more remote the community the poorer the student outcomes' (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2010:7). It further notes that 'experience has shown that improvements in the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students arise from collaborative action that is responsive to local needs' (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2010:6). Evidence of Indigenous people being involved in the process of review, planning and consultation (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2010:7) is an important step toward greater inclusion of Indigenous people and honours the call by Indigenous people and advocates for better policy making (for example, Maddison, 2009) to talk to those directly involved in the work of the policy. In my view, this is a very important first step, but it must be built upon to ensure inclusion does not occur superficially. There remains, an implicit expectation that Indigenous students will conform to a particular 'image' of the student. This, I argue, can be seen in the ways in which inclusion is framed. Aboriginal people are seen as being included when governments allow Indigenous 'advisors' to contribute to policy and programs (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2010:14), demonstrating how Indigenous inclusion relies on being invited into the 'mainstream' discourse to 'advise'. This places those already acting within this discourse in a powerful and central position, suggesting they make the decisions and decide on what may be included. This, Young (1990) suggests, is typical of oppression,

Social and economic privilege means...that groups which have it behave as though they have a right to speak and be heard, that others treat them as though they have that right, and that they have the material, personal, and organizational resources that enable them to speak and be heard. As a result, policy issues are often defined by the assumptions and priorities of the privileged. (p 185)

The invitation to contribute also does not escape the possibility that inclusion of Indigenous perspectives and advice is forced into an already 'raced' framework as there is no acknowledgement of the impact of whiteness as powerful 'truth' inherent in the current discourse. Whiteness is seen here then as normal, an example of the criticism

of education noted in CRT, in which 'everyone is ranked and categorized in relation to these points of opposition' (Ladson-Billings, 2009:19). This shows that in seeking to 'include' other perspectives the focus is typically on 'them' at the expense of interrogating 'us' and through that interrogation, that which is preventing 'them' (or those deemed outside of the central 'white' experience) from experiencing deep and beneficial inclusion.

Such a focus on Indigenous people to change, adapt or straddle two cultures continues: 'The Australian Government and education providers will work together to promote the cross-cultural value of formal education in contemporary Australia to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and families' (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2010:14) and 'The Australian Government and education providers will work together to develop options to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in regional and remote areas to access high quality secondary schooling while retaining links with their communities' (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2010:14). This suggests that for Indigenous students to be included they will have to have programs that are an addition to the mainstream program or travel to schools deemed 'high quality'. Indigenous inclusion, therefore, is either added on rather than incorporated, or requires assimilation into an institution already deemed successful or 'quality'. This consequently acts to maintain the powerful superiority of mainstream, 'white' culture and is another example of the need for Indigenous students to 'catch up' with other students (Ladson-Billings, 2009:28) rather than Indigenous culture, knowledge and strengths being valued within the educational discourse to enable participation and achievement.

Gewirtz and Power (2001) have written about the limitations of 'recognition' in achieving social justice. They advocate instead 'participation', describing social justice with this aim as associational justice. Gewirtz and Cribb (2002) also address this idea, suggesting this form of justice requires consideration of social and political context and higher levels of participation within these contexts (p 507). They argue that,

For economic and cultural justice to be achieved it will be necessary for previously subordinated groups to participate fully in decisions about how the principles of distribution and recognition should be defined and implemented. (p 503)

'Recognition' in education policy and practice typically takes tokenistic forms. The inclusion of Indigenous perspectives and aspirations will, therefore, need to move beyond recognition to participation, to more sufficiently serve Indigenous people and achieve genuine inclusion.

The *Action Plan* outlines strategies to be employed at national, systemic and local levels. Some of these include: schools seek 'to enhance the linguistic, cultural and

contextual resources that students bring to their schooling' (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2010:18); and support and develop 'pedagogies that are sensitive to and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' languages and cultures' (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2010:19). And at a national level: Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) will ensure that NAPLAN tests, 'are not culturally biased against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2010:21); and 'Australian Government and education providers will work together to support access to family literacy and numeracy programs, including multilingual family programs' (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2010:21). There is also evidence of partnerships between schools and communities being developed (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2010:15), which suggests greater collaboration and involvement. Inclusion is typically, however, seen as taking a portion of Indigenous culture and experience and inserting it into the larger, more established canon. The intentions of the *Action Plan* often refer to finding space for Indigenous inclusion within the dominant system, which I argue, maintains systematic control over what is considered worthy knowledge. There is also a need to elaborate on the ways in which 'linguistic, cultural and contextual resources' are to be enhanced, how pedagogies will engage with 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' languages and cultures' and how cultural bias will be avoided in NAPLAN tests. My analysis in chapter four of some of the NAPLAN tests from 2010 and 2009 reveals strong cultural bias, suggesting this has not yet been addressed or it has been done without an understanding of the powerful presence of whiteness as bias.

Indigenous students are also referred to in relation to the 'successful' and 'engaged' non-Indigenous student, such as a target addressing attendance that states: 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are enrolled in school and progressing through schooling at the *same rate as non-Indigenous students*' (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2010:17, emphasis added). This demonstrates how Indigenous inclusion and achievement are often assessed as needing to rise to the level of the non-Indigenous student, acting to maintain a hierarchical and hegemonic relationship. Foucault's (1994) account of how particular truths that have become established in society is helpful here: 'individuals who establish a certain consensus, and who find themselves within a certain network of practices of power and constraining institutions' are able to speak a 'truth' and impose it on others (p 297). This is similar to a CRT approach, coming particularly from a race perspective, in which the 'truth' of whiteness establishes a dominant cultural model that has regulatory power (Ladson-Billings and Donnor, 2008).

The issue of school leadership and quality teaching is addressed in this policy in a similar way to the *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* (Banks, 2009) report analysed earlier. It is stated that, 'It is important that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are taught by high quality teachers in schools led by effective and supportive principals who are assisted by a world-class curriculum that incorporates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives' (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2010:22). This, along with the assertion that Indigenous students 'become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens' (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2010:23) need to be interrogated and expanded further. These statements assume 'world-class', 'confident', 'creative', 'active', 'informed' and 'citizen' are notions of universality and that once these are provided or established it is up to individuals to choose to be included. Leonardo (2004) suggests 'the white supremacist, patriarchal, capitalist subject represents the standard for human, or the figure of a whole person, and everyone else is a fragment' (p 139). This creates a challenge therefore for conceptualising and enacting inclusion that does not slip towards assimilation.

Other aspects of this policy which are important but vaguely expressed and, therefore, risk tokenism are: an increased Indigenous educator workforce (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2010:22) and inclusion of 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives to ensure that all young Australians have the opportunity to learn about, acknowledge and value the cultures and languages of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians' (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2010:24). These inclusions demonstrate intentions to move towards greater participation of Indigenous people and 'perspectives' and offer an opportunity to shift the power that has been maintained by non-Indigenous people. Greater focus on developing these aspects of the policy is therefore important if there is to be a shift towards inclusion that truly benefits Indigenous people.

I will now consider the Victorian policy, *Wannik*, and the ways in which inclusion in this policy connects and departs from the conception investigated above.

Analysis of 'Wannik: Education Strategy for Koorie Students 2008'

This strategy is an example of a policy that has been developed with considerable attention to partnership with Indigenous people and Indigenous educators. It is a Victorian government policy that grew out of a review of education provision for Koorie students and it is stated in the policy that, 'it was developed in close partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI)' (Victorian Department

of Education, 2008:5). This creates some very strong distinctions about the nature of inclusion and the ways in which intentions are stated and assessed. The policy states that, 'The Strategy will be responsive to community needs at the local level – it will be implemented in partnership with, rather than for, the community' (Victorian Department of Education, 2008:6). Partnership is mentioned throughout the document (Victorian Department of Education, 2008:6, 14), demonstrating its importance in the policy enactment. This explicit articulation of collaboration suggests a space in which Indigenous people's voices are positioned equally, in contrast to inviting them in to 'advise', which predominated in the *Action Plan* (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2010) analysed previously.

It is of interest, however, that this policy came about through recognition of the inability of the *Blueprint for Government Schools* to adequately address the 'needs of Koorie young people' (Victorian Department of Education, 2008:7). This illustrates the way in which inclusion of Indigenous students is seen to require special attention, suggesting the current system is still uncomfortable with how Koorie 'difference' can be incorporated. I will look more closely at this issue in chapter four. Although it is important to recognise and address Indigenous exclusion, the nature of the remedies advocated is also important.

In seeking measures for inclusion in the *Wannik* strategy, Koorie disadvantage is outlined (Victorian Department of Education, 2008:7-8) and recognition of government failings in some areas is acknowledged, such as Victoria being 'well behind other states in recognising the cultural identity of our Koorie population within a curriculum framework' (Victorian Department of Education, 2008:12). Inclusion, however, seems to be still focused firmly on the Indigenous individual as in need of remedying, it being stated that 'specific approaches that target the individual needs of Koorie students' will be required, as well as suggesting Koorie students will need Individual Education Plans (Victorian Department of Education, 2008:15, 18) and 'intensive literacy and numeracy programs for students achieving below expected levels' will be offered (Victorian Department of Education, 2008:6). Koorie students are, therefore, framed as 'Other' and in need of extra assistance to enable them to be included in the mainstream. Foucault (1977) suggests such strategies are characteristic of discipline and surveillance, which makes the individual a 'case', to be 'described, judged, measured, compared with others, in his very individuality' and who then must be 'trained or corrected, classified, normalized' (p 191). CRT also suggests that failure is typically conceived of as individual or the result of cultural factors (Leonardo, 2007:265), which I suggest is evident here. I am not advocating that additional academic support for Indigenous students not be provided, but drawing attention to the ways in which remedies can carry with them particular negative impacts that may in fact inhibit or

restrict the support being offered.

Other forms of inclusion evident in this policy are inclusion through incentives, such as 'additional support and incentives for top students' (Victorian Department of Education, 2008:6) and inclusion based on merit through a commitment to 'provide support and encouragement for high achieving students by providing scholarships, allocating places for high-achieving Koorie students in Victoria's selective entry government schools' (Victorian Department of Education, 2008:16), mentoring and residential leadership and cultural identity programs (Victorian Department of Education, 2008:16). This encouragement and recognition of achievement may be important but it also positions Koorie students as currently needing to work harder and then they will be included and achieve. Again, it creates a focus on the student, similar to that seen in conceptions of Indigenous students as disadvantaged and is evidence of the influence of meritocratic values (Young, 1990:192-198). This ignores the influence of structural and systemic issues of exclusion. It suggests that Koorie students who are not 'high-achieving' are lazy and not grasping the opportunities provided by education. Thus issues of race and whiteness inherent in the education system risk becoming invisible and unrecognised as factors contributing to inequality.

A strength of this policy, however, is a focus on outcomes and a desire to place Koorie students 'at the centre of reform' (Victorian Department of Education, 2008:14) of the system, rather than reforming the student to fit the current situation. A focus on the outcome of equality, rather than equality within process is advocated by CRT scholars (Tate, 1997-229). There is also more evidence in this policy of specific concern regarding acknowledgement of identity, it being explained that Koorie students should expect to: 'be valued within the classroom by your teachers and classmates' and 'engage with your culture in day-to-day school work and activities' (Victorian Department of Education, 2008:18) and that 'your culture will be celebrated and respected by the broader school community' (Victorian Department of Education, 2008:19). This is a considerable divergence from other policies and reports examined earlier, which tend to suggest culture, knowledge and perspectives of Indigenous people need to be invited to be included.

Analysis in this section has shown that the notion of inclusion is seen in these policies (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2010, Victorian Department of Education, 2008) to create greater opportunities for Indigenous people to have a voice in the design, processes and outcomes of educational achievement. Inclusion, I argue, starts to move away from the deficit view typically inherent in the conception of Indigenous students as disadvantaged. The Victorian policy tended to show this to a greater extent than the national action plan, with greater evidence of Indigenous people as participants in the process. The *Action*

Plan tended to demonstrate that the intention of inclusion can continue to enforce a power relationship in which Indigenous people are invited into an existing discourse to offer 'perspectives' and 'advice'. However, measures aimed to increase and support inclusion of Indigenous students can also be seen in both the documents analysed to rely on incentives, meritocracy and assimilation.

Conclusion

Conceptions of the Indigenous student in educational policy and reporting have typically fallen into a framework of disadvantage, with evidence of an emerging framework of inclusion. Both of these frameworks, however, as represented in official documentation, tend to rely on Eurocentric and colonialist vantage points to assess disadvantage and offer inclusion.

Disadvantage tends to frame Indigenous students as the 'problem' that needs to be rectified, therefore, positioning them outside the mainstream and suggesting solutions based on what is seen to assist non-Indigenous students to achieve. This acts to position the gaze on the Indigenous student (or the 'Other') rather than the institution that is contributing to the disadvantage through often subtle and ingrained exclusion and oppression. The framing of inclusion enables greater opportunity for the locus of change to fall on the educational institution. The Victorian policy, *Wannik: Education Strategy for Koorie Students 2008*, shows some moves towards a deeper engagement with inclusion through participation of Indigenous people in the process of change and review. The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010-2014*, however, illustrates the way that inclusion of Indigenous people typically enters a power relationship in which Indigenous views and perspectives require invitation into the discourse to offer advice. This has the effect of inclusion being offered by the dominant culture rather than expected by the minority culture.

This chapter has illuminated some tensions in conceptions of Indigenous students as 'disadvantaged' and 'included' within the educational discourse. It has also raised questions about the need to create policy to specifically address these issues for Indigenous students: why is it necessary to design policy specifically for Indigenous students? Why are they experiencing such disadvantage? Why do they not fit within the discourse in the way that other students do? The following chapter will investigate some of these questions. It will seek to uncover the nature of the discourse that seems to inherently exclude Indigenous students and prevent their educational success by looking at what is considered 'success' and how 'difference' is perceived and negotiated within a dominant framework of accountability and improvement.

Chapter Four

Educational Policy and the Notion of Difference

Introduction

There has been considerable work designed to address specifically Indigenous achievement in education, as demonstrated by the raft of policy and program initiatives discussed in previous chapters. This is important in attending to specific needs, however, I argue here that it should not occur at the expense of transforming mainstream education to better cater for those deemed 'different'. The need to create policy to address Indigenous educational needs demonstrates that Indigenous students often exist outside the 'mainstream' or the dominant discourse. A proper consideration of the inclusion of Indigenous students and their 'difference' requires examination of broader educational discourse and the ways in which the 'successful' student and the 'improving' school are both identified and conveyed. In doing this, we gain insight into the particular behaviour, types of conduct and experiences that are valued within the system. It also allows investigation of Foucault's proposition that there are particular ways of speaking and acting within a discourse that are accepted above others, and uncovers the ways in which a framework of whiteness is subtly reinforced. The introductory section of this chapter will provide some context for the current education landscape, outlining some defining features of the nature of the discourse. This establishes a context for the following analysis of educational policies that are concerned with student success and school improvement.

The growing influence of globalisation and marketisation on education discourse has brought with it further tensions around difference and sameness, stability and disorder, oppression and empowerment, success and failure. Support of multiculturalism and a commitment to 'diversity' has remained a key component of much official educational documentation (for example, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2008). Meanwhile the push towards globalisation and marketisation in education has encouraged prominence of the notion of accountability (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010:72), which is concerned with ensuring schools and teachers lift the educational standards of students often based largely on judgments made from standardised testing. This has in turn contributed to a culture of surveillance and competition, (McInerney, 2004:88). Lingard and Rizvi (2010) suggest that,

The economic reframing of education policy has led to an emphasis on policies of education as the production of human capital to ensure the competitiveness of the national economy in the global context. (p 16)

This influence of market forces on education has had a range of well-documented effects. Lingard (2010) illustrates how 'economic reframing' has led to the push towards standardised high-stakes testing and new accountabilities with the emergence of a

focus on education within human capital paradigms (p 136). He suggests there is tension between the focus on measurable outcomes and the 'multifarious purposes of schooling' (p 135). Lingard and Rizvi (2010) propose that currently, 'education is regarded as the producer of the required human capital' (p 16), thus schools are increasingly positioned to privilege the knowledge, skills and dispositions that will insert students into the labour market. This new conception of human capital as linked strongly to global competition, produces an emphasis on the individual and their capacity for competitive advantage (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010:80).

Many researchers have shown that the notion of 'choice' is central to the marketisation agenda (Keating, 2010, Henry et al., 1999:89, Rizvi and Lingard, 2010:125, Lingard, 2010:132). Lingard (2010) notes how this has been promoted in the public sphere in Australia through a range of strategies (p 132), for example the development of a national testing program (NAPLAN) and the *My School* website which makes available school achievement data. These have been designed to allow parents to compare and assess school success. What has emerged through these new forms of governance and the focus on outputs and performance, however, is a culture of low trust and implicit surveillance (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010:119).

The emphasis on conformativity and greater surveillance of school practices is not confined to Australian education. As Rizvi and Lingard observe, this focus is also evident in the activities and policies of the influential OECD (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010:129). This is accompanied by a rhetoric of accountability. Again, accountability can have different meanings depending on the values propelling it. Lingard (2010) suggests that the type of accountability advocated within the neo-liberal agenda of marketisation of education relies on uniform prescription and mistrust (p 130-131), noting, with Rizvi this has 'reductive effects on pedagogies and purposes of schooling' (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010:201). Other forms of accountability are possible, however, such as democratic accountability (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010:194, 200) which Rizvi and Lingard argue, makes way for greater social equity and increased participation (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010:200).

The above discussion outlines briefly some influential and well-documented issues that currently impact education nationally and globally. In this chapter I will investigate how issues of globalisation, standardisation, conformity and accountability are represented in policy and standardised tests in Australia. My aim is to identify some of the influences this has on notions of 'success' and 'difference' and in turn to consider the implications of this for constructions of Indigenous disadvantage and educational inclusion. The analysis of this chapter will be undertaken in the following sections: 'A Picture of the 'Successful' Student' and 'School Improvement and Accountability and the Notion of Difference'. The first section will investigate the idea of the 'successful student' and the

attributes advocated in official policy discourse that lead to success. It will demonstrate that the articulated attributes for success typically require assimilation into a particular way of being, which I argue is influenced by a culture of 'whiteness'. The second section will examine the notion of difference within the current 'improvement and accountability' climate through comparing four state and territory policies. This section will illustrate the ways in which, in these documents, 'improvement and accountability' typically denotes and advocates sameness. I will suggest this demonstrates that there is limited space within the current education discourse to acknowledge and adequately address 'difference'. Instead a discourse of sameness contributes to the construction of cultural norms that operate in subtle ways to encourage a singular pathway to success. This also contributes to a marking out of those who do not follow these cultural norms as deviant and in need of normalisation, thus paving the way for policy that specifically targets 'disadvantage' (the topic of investigation in the previous chapter).

A Picture of the 'Successful' Student

In this section I will look at the ways the 'successful' student is positioned within influential education discourses, drawing on three sets of national educational documents. The first is the *National Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, developed in Melbourne in 2008 (and still in use currently), which states a vision for educational success for Australian students. The second is a poster used to promote 'values education' in schools, which outlines the values that should be taught and addressed in Australian education. And the third is a series of national tests given to grade three and five students during 2009 and 2010. This range of documents has been chosen in an endeavour to capture a broad sense of the ways in which success is illustrated and promoted through educational policy (and related documents) and to investigate the opportunities or restrictions this poses for Indigenous students' success.

Analysis of 'National Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians'

The *National Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (2008) outlines two goals, the first that, 'Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence', and the second that, 'all young Australians become: successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens' (p 7). These goals are elaborated upon (p 7-9) and then eight 'inter-related' action areas are identified to assist in realising the goals (p 10). This declaration gives insight to the national policy commitment to equity and inclusion and contains what can definitely be considered useful and important intentions, such as: all students are 'provided with high-quality schooling free from discrimination'; schools 'work in partnership with local communities'; parents, communities and young people 'hold high expectations for their educational outcomes';

and that governments and schools promote 'personalised learning that aims to fulfill the diverse capabilities of young Australians' (p 7). These goals, however, are in tension with the global discourse of standardisation and accountability, which was discussed in the introductory section. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) note that tension is a common feature of policy making, which has to deal with a range of conflicting values often leading to the re-articulation of their meaning in the process (p 72). It is not so much an assessment of the value of the intentions of this document that I am interested in here, therefore, but the opportunity it affords for insight into the values that may be guiding the intentions, the tensions that are inherent in the struggle to articulate goals for success and equity and the silences that may emerge through this investigation. Young (1990) suggests structural oppression can be hidden by what are 'often unconscious assumptions and reactions of well meaning people in ordinary interactions' (p 41). I argue that this is evident in subtle ways in some sections of the *Declaration* and that this gives insight into the ways in which historical patterns of privilege can continue to influence the values and intentions advocated in the present.

Interestingly, Indigenous people are explicitly named and attended to in the *Declaration*. This, I argue, can be both a strength and a concern. There is, for example, explicit acknowledgement of the value of Indigenous cultures in the Preamble to the Declaration (Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008:4); and there is a commitment to beginning with Indigenous students' experiences:

Ensure that schools build on local cultural knowledge and experience of Indigenous students as a foundation for learning, and work in partnership with local communities on all aspects of the schooling process, including to promote high expectations for the learning outcomes of Indigenous students. (Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008:7)

It is stated that active and informed citizens should 'understand and acknowledge the value of Indigenous cultures and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians' (Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008:9); and, 'partnerships between schools and Indigenous communities, based on cross-cultural respect' (Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008:10) are advocated. Importantly, this has the effect of foregrounding the value of Indigenous culture and prevents it from being completely denied or ignored in this discourse, a considerable shift from the ways Indigenous culture has been dealt with in the past, in which culture and language were completely disallowed in schools (Groome, 1998:172).

The report also suggests, however, that learning outcomes of Indigenous students must 'improve to match those of other students' (Ministerial Council for Education,

Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008:7), positioning Indigenous students again in relation to those whom have already 'succeeded'. There is no doubt the goal of Indigenous success is important. The ways in which this is expressed, however, are also important and I suggest give insight into the ways the education system is set up to compare, rank and diagnose based largely on 'whiteness'. In this case, Indigenous students easily slip into the position of failure, in which they are seen as needing to 'match' other students. This goal also demonstrates the illusion that bell hooks (cited in Gillborn, 2009) argues commonly presents itself when well-meaning whites desire to address discrimination and disadvantage,

When liberal whites fail to understand how they can and/or do embody white-supremacist values and beliefs even though they may not embrace racism as prejudice or domination (especially domination that involves coercive control), they cannot recognize the ways their actions support and affirm the very structure of racist domination and oppression that they profess to wish to see eradicated. (hooks cited in Gillborn, 2009:57)

It could be argued, then, that such a structure of 'racist domination and oppression' continues to quietly undermine the good intentions in the *Declaration*. This occurs through a focus on the individual rather than transformation of a system, which contributes to inequality through privileging particular knowledge and experiences (which I illuminate more fully in the analysis to follow in this section). This is evident in the *Declaration* in the section devoted to 'improving educational outcomes for Indigenous youth and disadvantaged young people' (Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008:15). Indigenous 'difference' is noted here as Indigenous students' failure, in which they are: 'substantially behind other students in key areas of enrolment, attendance, participation, literacy, numeracy, retention and completion' (Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008:15). A commitment to engaging Indigenous students and families and improving Indigenous participation is articulated (Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008:15), which indicates a positive move towards the type of participatory justice advocated by Gewirtz, Power and Cribb (2002, 2001), as discussed in chapter three. There is, however, still an emphasis on Indigenous deficiencies (Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008:15). CRT has drawn attention to 'reforms that emphasize the deficiencies of students rather than those that promote a social justice understanding of racial equity' (Zamudio et al., 2011:17). Indigenous students in this case are therefore not seen as successful, but instead in need of reform, through concerted individual attention and 'targeted support' (Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008:15).

The second goal in the *National Declaration* outlines the attributes of 'successful learners', 'confident and creative individuals' and 'active and informed citizens' (Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008:8-9). The attributes outlined for 'successful learners' encompass: 'essential skills in literacy and numeracy'; productive use of information technologies; the ability to 'evaluate evidence in a disciplined way as the result of studying fundamental disciplines'; 'motivated to reach their full potential'; and working towards 'continued success in further education, training or employment' (Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008:8). It is suggested the 'successful' student, therefore, must focus on the skills of literacy, numeracy and information technologies, placed here at the top of the hierarchy of knowledge. In these attributes and those outlined for the 'confident and creative individual' (Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008:9) there is a particular emphasis on the individual to achieve, to be studious and disciplined and to have goals for themselves to enter and compete within the further education and labour markets. These are not bad goals in themselves, however, I argue that this also points to an inclination to project success as achieved along a singular path and that success relies on individual effort, competition and discipline. Following Young (1990) this suggests a blindness to difference within cultural imperialism in which, 'norms expressing the point of view and experiences of privileged groups appear neutral and universal' (p 165). This then – even if unwittingly – fosters assimilationist projections as all students are expected to 'be like the mainstream, in behavior, values and goals' (Young, 1990:165). I argue that it also allows for failure to be attributed to the individual's lack of effort, discipline and ability to compete to achieve.

The attributes of 'active and informed citizens' contain a reference to 'Indigenous cultures', proposing the idea that good citizens should 'understand and acknowledge the value of Indigenous cultures' and also 'appreciate Australia's social, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity' (Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008:9). The suggestion that young Australians should 'appreciate' diversity implies it is something that exists outside the mainstream and must be viewed and consumed. It also points towards the positioning of whiteness as the norm, invoking Leonardo's (2002) observation that whites often see themselves as 'individuals and not a racial group' (p 45), instead describing diversity as cultures and racial groups other than white.

These goals suggest young Australians are successful when they strive for individual success along a normative path. This raises a number of questions regarding Indigenous students' success: Where does the Indigenous student fit within this 'successful' ideal? Where is the value of Indigenous knowledge, or of cultural

knowledge? How can difference be expressed within success without it being rendered abnormal? Is it possible for Indigenous young people to be active citizens in the current discourse or are there particular historical and cultural experiences, which prevent them from realising this goal?

I will now examine a poster delivered to Australian schools, which outlines the values that the *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools* (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005a) directs schools to promote and enact. I do this to illuminate further the ways in which the education discourse may contribute to a particular reading of success.

Analysis of Values Education Poster for Schools

The push for values education in Australia was initiated during the conservative Howard Government era (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005a) and was part of a reinvigorated emphasis on citizenship education. The program has, however, continued in less explicit forms under the current federal government and the nine values identified as essential for Australian schooling (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005b) allow insight into the type of student the education system encourages. The nine value areas outlined are: care and compassion; doing your best; fair go; freedom; honesty and trustworthiness; integrity; respect; responsibility; and understanding, tolerance and inclusion (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005b). These values emphasize the individual, egalitarianism and equal opportunity (remarkably similar to the values that seem to guide the *National Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*), which Young (1990) suggests are features of liberal humanism and individualism (p 166). Following Young's analysis of these ideological standpoints, differences of race, culture and ethnicity (among others) are therefore not emphasized (Young, 1990:166) and the individual tends to be stripped of aspects of their identity that fall outside what is considered the 'norm'.

The values presented on this poster, I suggest, do not take into consideration many other important values and experiences, such as interdependence, difference, diversity and listening. It is therefore implicitly assumed in this poster that values are neutral and devoid of cultural or racial influence. Moreover, the articulation of these values further implicitly suggests that freedom and understanding, inclusion and respect are equally available to each student across Australia, thus positioning students on an equal platform, typically one grounded in 'whiteness' ideals that appear invisible. There is also an assumption here, I argue, that these values are universal, or if not universal they are important for full participation in Australian society.

As Young (1990) points out, however, 'the rejection and devaluation of one's culture and perspective should not be a condition of full participation in social life' (p 166). The

positioning of these values as important for students to enact and develop contributes to the strengthening and legitimisation of particular identities through constant reinforcement, a process which Youdell has described in other contexts as 'the performative constitution of identity' (cited in Gillborn, 2009:55-6). It is typically those who do not identify with what is considered the norm who notice the performative elements of the construction of a white identity. Those comfortable in this identity, however, do not see it as different and therefore, whiteness remains invisible and 'normal', creating a standard by which everyone is judged (Leonardo, 2007:263). This also creates a form of disciplinary power, in which the values advocated aim to produce disciplined individuals and those who do not enact these in the particular ways advocated are rendered highly visible while the disciplinary power becomes invisible (Foucault, 1979:187).

The imagery chosen to accompany the poster of the nine values 'for Australian schooling' reinforce the Anglo identity being advocated through the values. The Australian flag appears at the top of the poster, a symbol that excludes Indigenous people and reinforces Australia's colonial identity. An image of the soldier, Simpson, and his donkey (who collected wounded Australian soldiers from the battlefields in WWI) provide a background for the values on this poster. This suggests Simpson, a white man helping fight a war in Europe, exemplifies the values being advocated. And the quote selected, 'Character is Destiny', reinforces the emphasis on the individual to choose success, implying those who fail lack character and in this case the internalisation of these particular values. It also reinforces the individualist push of the neoliberal agenda in education. The Indigenous student who falls outside of these ideals of success, which I argue, are guided by white dominance, is thus rendered a failure and perhaps even at times, a deviant. This evokes Foucault's account of normalisation, in which he suggested anyone that falls outside of the norm is constituted as a deviant who requires normalisation (O'Farrell, 2005:104).

I will now move to examine some NAPLAN tests in an effort to assess the ways in which these national standardised tests may encourage success of particular students.

Analysis of a selection of primary school NAPLAN tests

The way the 'successful' student is portrayed becomes particularly evident when examining the content of some of the Australian national standardised tests (the testing program is called NAPLAN: National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy). These tests are administered at years three, five, seven and nine across the entire country. They test reading, writing, English language conventions and Mathematics.

Analysis of NAPLAN can be supported by Foucault's notion of regimes of truth. Foucault was interested in the use of the 'examination' as a normalising tool (O'Farrell,

2005:105), but he also suggested that 'truths', which are reinforced through examination, are 'subject to constant economic and political incitement' (Foucault, 1980:131). This, I suggest, is evident here in that success in the NAPLAN provides political and cultural power. Therefore, those students who have an advantage through the ways the tests are presented and the types of knowledge tested, are able to build their power politically, culturally and, as a consequence, often economically. NAPLAN, therefore, is a powerful political and cultural device and its value as 'truth' is reinforced constantly through 'economic and political incitement'.

Standardised testing, while often presented as value-free and neutral, has also been found to give advantage to those of the dominant culture as the tests often reflect particular value choices and cultural meanings (Young, 1990:209). There have been a range of negative implications found to occur through standardised testing, such as a narrowing of curriculum, teaching to the test, and decreased trust in and valuing of teachers (Lingard, 2010:130-131). Although the value of standardised testing is an important debate, it is beyond the focus of my discussion here. I am instead using the texts of standardised tests to examine educational discourses and to investigate the ways in which dominant 'truths' and values may be evident and the effect this may have on the possibility of success for Indigenous students. A closer look at some of the tests delivered to grade three and five students during 2009 and 2010, illustrates the ways in which whiteness influences how and which students are positioned as successful. In investigating this subtle privileging of subject position I have used the following NAPLAN tests: the 2010 Numeracy tests for both Grade 3 and 5 and the 2009 Language conventions tests for Grade 3 and 5. Within these tests, which contain questions in which scenarios are presented and situations are explained there are a number of examples of dominance of a particular lifestyle and way of being.

One of the most striking elements in each of these tests is that the names of the people presented in the scenarios are predominantly Anglo in origin. For example, some of the names used throughout these four tests are: Tom, Steve, Rick, David, Jess, Anne, James, Hannah, Lucy, Anna, Jake, Kate, Josh, Nick, Henry, Jack, John, Sam, Rob, Ben and Sally (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2010a, ACARA, 2010b, ACARA, 2009a, ACARA, 2009b). There are a couple of names of Hebrew or European origin, for example, Miriam, Karl, Aliya and Gina (ACARA, 2009b:Q44, 47, ACARA, 2010a:Q10) and there is one Indian name, Sanjay (ACARA, 2010b:Q7).

In the grade 3 numeracy test, question two shows a plan of 'Jay's bedroom', which contains a single bed, desk, cupboard, bookshelf and toy box (ACARA, 2010a:Q2). This bedroom set up is not universal. Many children, particularly Indigenous children in non-urban circumstances live in situations in which they share a bedroom, even a bed,

with a number of siblings or extended family. Their cultures may not place a high value on individual ownership and therefore may not consider bedrooms belonging to one person in particular.

A Eurocentric lifestyle continues to be portrayed throughout the tests with references to farms (ACARA, 2009b:Q35-39), paddocks and farm animals (ACARA, 2009a:Q6), domestic pets (ACARA, 2010a:Q18, ACARA, 2010b:Q39, ACARA, 2009b:Q50), new cars (ACARA, 2009a:Q17), house ownership (ACARA, 2009a:Q42), metropolitan parks and gardens (ACARA, 2009a:Q16, ACARA, 2010b:Q38, ACARA, 2009b:Q35-39), compost (ACARA, 2009b:Q35-39), and buses and trains (ACARA, 2009a:Q20). The jobs referred to are that of nurse, scientist and bus driver (ACARA, 2009b:Q15-17) and school activities such as excursions to the aquarium and movies (ACARA, 2010a:Q28), a swimming carnival (ACARA, 2009b:Q24) and a school camp (ACARA, 2010b:Q12) are portrayed. References to the beach (ACARA, 2010a:Q6, ACARA, 2009b:Q40-41) also appear on a couple of occasions, with no references to other Australian landscapes such as deserts or bushland. All the images of children in the tests are of Anglo children (ACARA, 2010a:Q3, ACARA, 2009a:Q31-33, ACARA, 2009b:Q26-28), with the exception of one Asian baby (ACARA, 2010b:Q23). The extra-curricula activity referred to is dancing classes (ACARA, 2009a:Q5), which are more likely to occur in a metropolitan location. There are a couple of questions, which use the Western calendar to frame a mathematical question (ACARA, 2010a:Q19) and there are a number of references to shoes and shoelaces (ACARA, 2010a:Q21, ACARA, 2009a:Q43, 44, ACARA, 2010b:Q15, ACARA, 2009b:Q30, 34). The only references to non-Western or non-metropolitan subject matter are a description of a kookaburra (ACARA, 2009a:Q3) and the suggestion that Uluru is a famous place (ACARA, 2009a:Q9). This illustrates the implicit messages conveyed through these tests, which I argue suggests that a successful student lives in a particular way and has particular aspirations and interests.

The scenarios presented in these tests show people using English and Mathematical knowledge. When the people portrayed in these scenarios are predominantly of Anglo origin and experience it can have the effect of suggesting it is people like this that are successful and confident users of this knowledge. People of other origins and experiences seem to be silenced or overlooked in these portrayals. Students who identify with the ways of living that are represented and who are familiar with this subject matter, therefore, find a place of safety from which to access these tests. They can see themselves or aspects of their experiences represented and the situations portrayed are more likely to be those they have experienced, thus enabling them to connect what is being asked of them in the tests to their own experiences. This places them in a position of advantage while those who have to imagine these scenarios and struggle to connect their own experiences to what is presented are placed out of their comfort zone and do

not see themselves represented as using this knowledge in their everyday lives. The notion of safety is something Leonardo and Porter (2010) suggest is a strong component of race dialogue in the US and that commonly 'white humanity' is established at the 'expense of people of color' (p 140).

This also has the effect of 'normalising' the experiences presented in the tests. Foucault (1979) was particularly interested in the idea of the 'examination' and its 'normalising gaze', suggesting it is a form of 'surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish' (p 184). In this case, I argue that we can see how the NAPLAN examinations 'normalise' towards a 'white' ideal. Those who do not succeed in this examination are deemed in need of correction, suggesting they need to become more like those who have succeeded. It also suggests the ways this form of disciplinary power, 'makes possible the knowledge that is transformed into political investment' (Foucault, 1979:185) as these tests are considered a measure of success and therefore, those who achieve well retain a powerful position and political prominence.

Young (1990) also notes the normalising strategies of evaluation, suggesting,

Criteria often carry assumptions about ways of life, styles of behaviour, and values that derive from and reflect the experience of the privileged groups who design and implement them. Since the ideology of impartiality leads evaluators to deny the particularity of these standards, groups with different experiences, values, and ways of life are evaluated as falling short. (p 205)

If we are interested in Indigenous students (and students of other non-Anglo cultural backgrounds and experiences) becoming proficient and powerful in English and Mathematical literacy, these students need to be portrayed as using these languages and interacting within this discourse with confidence. They need to be able to see themselves represented as using these forms of communication and they need to have their experiences validated in the discourse, otherwise those who have their experiences represented retain a cultural and symbolic advantage. One of the intentions of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010-2014* (2010) is to ensure NAPLAN tests 'are not culturally biased against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' (p 21). This is a pleasing intention, however, the above analysis reveals there is much to be done to address it.

Analysis of this range of documents, which act to guide and reinforce the conception of 'success' in education discourse, reveal some of the ways in which whiteness can be seen as a powerful and influential 'truth'. Students who identify easily with this 'truth' are therefore seen to be successful, while those deemed different are rendered failures.

In the following section I compare four state and territory policies related to the dominant discourse of 'improvement and accountability' currently influencing education. I will

examine the ways in which this agenda impacts notions of difference in an effort to illuminate particular structural influences on Indigenous students' capacity to achieve and be included.

School Improvement and Accountability and the Notion of Difference

School improvement and accountability form part of the national, neo-liberal push towards standardised, market-driven education (Lingard, 2010, Rizvi and Lingard, 2010). This drive for 'improvement' and 'accountability' impacts upon educational discourses in ways that tend to narrow what is considered success and improvement. I suggest here that this affects the way students who do not fit this narrow reading are positioned within the discourse. In this section I will draw on elements of the following state and territory policies: the Queensland *School Planning, Reviewing and Reporting Framework 2011* (Queensland Department of Education and Training, 2011); the Northern Territory *School Accountability and Performance Improvement Framework* (Northern Territory Government, 2006); the Victorian Blueprint, *Supporting School Improvement: Transparency and Accountability in Victorian Government Schools* (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2009); and the Western Australian *School Improvement and Accountability Framework* (Western Australian Department of Education and Training, 2008). These four policies have been chosen to represent official discourse from states and territories across the country, which have a range of contextual variants. Although I do not have space to look closely at each of these policies I will take sections from them to generate comparisons and contrast, identify some commonalities, and offer insight into the effects of improvement and accountability measures.

Each of these documents deals with similar issues around reporting, review, quality, measuring performance and accountability in schools. This is evidence of the strength of neo-liberal rhetoric in Australian education, as documented by numerous critical policy researchers (Henry et al., 1999, Lingard, 2010, Rizvi and Lingard, 2010). Outcomes and the measuring of performance are linked strongly to NAPLAN results in three of the documents (Northern Territory Government, 2006:6, 8, Queensland Department of Education and Training, 2011:2, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2009:17). The Western Australia (WA) document, however, has a section on 'standards review' in which it states schools are required to present a range of data on student achievement and 'as part of the self-assessment process, each school will make a judgement about whether the level of academic and non-academic performance is up to expectations given their particular context' (Western Australian Department of Education and Training, 2008:12). This emphasis on contextual factors that impact performance and outcomes is an interesting element that comes up most

strongly in the WA and Victorian documents (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2009:17, Western Australian Department of Education and Training, 2008:12). These policies both make provisions for factors that affect performance in order to measure performance fairly, which can be seen as acknowledging that not all students will have the resources and means to achieve to the same level. Instead of interrogating why this situation exists, however, the policies tend to construct this situation as inevitable, leaving individual students to transcend their circumstances to be like those achieving highly if they are to succeed. The Victorian policy (2009) extends this idea further when it suggests poorer performing schools can learn from the 'highest performing schools to drive improvement across the system' (p 23), thus assuming schools not performing well need to become more like those schools that are high performing. This often overlooks the social and economic characteristics of the school, staff and students, and has the effect of demonising those schools seen as failing, focusing completely on their weaknesses. The WA framework (2008), which has a section devoted to explaining 'successful students', states that 'standards of student achievement' are 'the central focus of school improvement and accountability' (p 4). This section also mentions 'contextual factors' that are outside the control of schools and states that schools are 'expected to demonstrate that every effort has been made to overcome contextual factors so that students receive the highest quality educational instruction' (Western Australian Department of Education and Training, 2008:4). This focus on contextual factors as the 'problem' to be remedied is indicative of the notion that minority cultures are deprived and therefore must be assimilated (Solorzano and Yosso, 2009:137-138) to erase the 'problem', thus those outside the 'norm' are again positioned in deficit.

Processes for reporting and review are outlined in all of the documents, suggesting schools need to be under constant surveillance to ensure improvement and accountability. This again illustrates Foucault's notion of 'disciplinary power' and the capacity of this form of power to control conduct and multiply capacities (O'Farrell, 2005:102). It also provides insight into how power 'forms knowledge' and 'produces discourse' (Foucault, 1980:119). The disciplinary power of review and accountability is seen to extend across this range of state and territory based policies, producing particular ways of behaving and interacting within the educational discourse. For example, the Victorian policy (2009) states that a fourth category of review, 'the Extended Diagnostic Review' has been added to three existing review categories (p 10) to assist schools with 'the greatest improvement challenges' (p 10). The Northern Territory (NT) framework states the performance review process should involve teacher, principal and outcome reviews with the core challenge to 'establish classroom routines and practices that represent personalised, evidence based, focused teaching and learning' (Northern Territory Government, 2006:8). The Queensland framework (2011)

outlines a number of internal and external review processes required to measure performance and targets (p 1-2). Finally the WA framework (2008) outlines the need for school self-assessment (p 6) and school and standards review (p 12-13). This framework also states the roles of an 'Expert Review Group', which has certain responsibilities for reviewing and reporting school performance (Western Australian Department of Education and Training, 2008:13). This 'expert' group is presumably seen to offer consistency in their judgement of schools and to measure school performance on the same scale. I argue, however, that this also gives insight into the ways performance is ranked and seen along a continuum that is constructed as universal. It also illustrates the increasing attention accorded to processes of surveillance, standardisation (proliferating categories of review) and normalisation. This emphasis on standardised review contributes to a push towards a singular conception of school success. It also could be read in light of CRT's notion of colorblindness in which the continued effects of race are ignored and obscured (Zamudio et al., 2011:26). In the documents I have analysed here success and school improvement are seen as value free and neutral and race is not considered in any way to be a factor in achieving success or improvement.

Leonardo (2007) illustrates how such neo-liberal agendas in education have had a polarising effect on schools in the US. He highlights the influence of race on perceived achievement, suggesting schools that are 'failing' with high proportions of students of color experience judgement in which,

The fault is entirely theirs, a cornerstone of color-blind discourse that conveniently forgets about structural reasons for school failure. On the other hand, when largely white middle-class schools and districts meet or exceed their targets, they receive a similar but beneficial message: that their merit is entirely theirs. (p 264)

The idea of accountability seems to have similar purposes to that of review, being designed to push school and teacher improvement towards a singular goal and monitor and control success. In these policies, accountability is linked to compliance (Northern Territory Government, 2006:10-11) and to achieving particular academic outcomes within the student population (Western Australian Department of Education and Training, 2008:4). The Victorian policy (2008) is particularly explicit about measures of accountability and the 'transparency' required to ensure accountability (p 12). This commitment to transparency, however, does not translate to issues of race and racism. A veneer of equality and transparency remains, which acts to disguise the dominance of whiteness and a singular conception of success and achievement. This commitment to transparency therefore becomes a form of disciplinary power (O'Farrell, 2005:102-103), rather than a tool to ensure equity and break down barriers to success.

The strength of these disciplinary and surveillance measures across the three states

and the Northern Territory helps create a situation in which difference is constructed as deviance. Does the improved or improving school have room for 'difference' or must they strive for 'sameness' in order to succeed? Or is difference always on the outer having to be invited in to be shared around? This agenda contributes to what Young (2001) describes as structural inequality, in which 'a set of reproduced social processes reinforce one another to enable or constrain individual actions in many ways (p 2). In this case, sameness is enabled and difference constrained.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined some of the ways in which the notion of difference is a troubling concept when applied to what education discourses typically understand and advocate as 'success' and 'improvement'. I have illustrated how notions of equity, excellence and quality are always embedded in particular political, cultural and racialised values, which render their meanings and effects different according to these values.

In chapter three, I discussed some of the benefits and risks of education policies specifically designed to address Indigenous inclusion. In this chapter, I have shown some of the ways in which Indigenous students are excluded from view, even in an educational environment of rhetorical inclusion, excellence and equity for all. In such a climate, then, there seems currently little room for Indigenous difference within the broader education system. This difference is typically seen as 'failure' and conceptualised as problematic. The responsibility to remedy this 'failure' tends to be placed upon individuals. Indigenous students and communities have to be assisted to transform their difference into attributes that are recognisable to the system built predominantly around whiteness, relics of a colonial conception of the superiority of the Anglo colonial subject. If the education discourse continues to value sameness as a precursor to success and improvement, inclusion of Indigenous students will require assimilation and the 'disadvantage' experienced by those unwilling or unable to assimilate will continue. An approach that strives for educational justice for Indigenous Australians, therefore, requires a combined policy approach in which specific policies recognise difference as a strength and empower Indigenous people to have a voice in education policy, as well as efforts to transform the education system through commitment to difference.

In the following chapter I will draw together the insights illuminated through my theoretical approach to analysing 'whiteness' and Indigenous educational disadvantage. I will also examine the impact these insights may have on future educational policy and practice.

Chapter Five

Implications and Recommendations: What are the possibilities for change?

Introduction

This study has attempted to offer a way of looking at Indigenous disadvantage and achievement that punctures the typical deficit view of Indigenous students. It has sought to transfer the remedial gaze from Indigenous students diagnosed with disadvantage to a system that, due to social and discursive constructions of the 'normalcy' of whiteness, tends to privilege and advantage those who identify easily with this subject position. I have drawn on critical race theory and elements of Foucault and Young's theoretical work, to illuminate these aspects of structural inequality within Australian education and in doing so I have attempted to create opportunities to view racial oppression within this system in some new ways. In this chapter I will elaborate some of the overall scholarly and applied contributions of the approach I have adopted. I will also unpack some of the insights this analysis has created that could be useful in relation to developing future policy and educational practice. I will address these matters under three sections: 'Listening', 'Difference and Responsibility', and 'Disruption and Discomfort'. Although detailed exploration of these matters is beyond the scope of this thesis, I outline them here, as I believe they are each important in re-envisioning Indigenous educational justice. I argue that although the size of this study limits the significance and power of its influence it has nevertheless been able to create an opening into a new way of looking at injustices related to race in education and provoked possibilities for opening new pathways to build towards Indigenous educational justice.

Conceptual Contribution

I have argued that issues of race and racial difference remain uncomfortable and disturbing matters in Australian education discourse, and that this discomfort is often transferred to a superficial commitment to acknowledging diversity. For Indigenous students, entering the education system with the legacy of overt racism and Anglo superiority still lingering, racism remains a major hurdle to their educational success and achievement. The analysis developed in this study has offered alternatives to the standard ways of viewing and serving Indigenous students in the education system. A reading of Indigenous students' relationship with the education system through a CRT lens, with the support of Foucauldian perspectives and elements of Young's work related to social justice, has illuminated a number of important blind spots that inhibit and often exclude Indigenous students, despite a veneer of inclusion and concern for their achievement.

The disadvantage experienced by many Indigenous students is the starting point for much of the official documentation related to Indigenous educational engagement. This starting point, however, places Indigenous students in a position of deficiency. The ways in which disadvantage is addressed in official reporting also tends to place the responsibility on those deemed disadvantaged to revoke the culture and identity familiar to them and adapt to suit the dominant system, which is seen as the 'norm'. Factors cited as contributing to disadvantage tend also to be related to this 'norm'. Being outside the 'norm' includes living in a remote location and in a non-nuclear family situation. When seeking remedies for Indigenous disadvantage the importance of cultural knowledge is often cited, however, it is usually placed in a position of support, a prop useful for gaining better outcomes in the dominant Western subject areas. Success in these subjects is of course important but not sufficient for remedying the oppression experienced by Indigenous students. Within the discourse of disadvantage there is a strong focus on deficiencies, suggesting Indigenous students need to 'catch up' to the more successful non-Indigenous students, which establishes an invisible whiteness as the 'norm' and those outside of this in need of 'normalisation'.

The notion of inclusion has been seen to offer a shift away from the focus on deficiencies, however, it still displays deficit conceptions through a focus on the individual, thus systemic oppression remains largely untheorised. Inclusion was found to often be positioned as an invitation to 'advise', allowing a dominance of whiteness to remain, however, there was some evidence of a shift from 'advice' to 'participation' in the Victorian policy, *Wannik*. The view of Indigenous students as 'Other', however, prevailed in much of the policy and remedies for low achievement centred on the individual and expectations that they reform. Culture and identity were seen in some instances to be valued more in these policies, although superficial acknowledgement of Indigenous culture as 'different' compared with the invisible white 'norm' was still evident.

The analysis of policies addressing Indigenous achievement was followed by an analysis of policies advocating educational success and inclusion for all. Across these policies and documents, success was found to focus on the 'individual' and a singular pathway to achievement. Indigenous difference tended to be acknowledged as outside the mainstream and diversity conveyed as a consumable needing inclusion by the mainstream. Values projected for success reinforced white achievement and individualism in an act to normalise student behaviour. And national tests were found to display privileging of whiteness, creating a place of safety and familiarity for students at ease with these aspects of whiteness, thus creating an advantage for these students.

Strategies intended to promote improvement in schools were found to display the narrowness and desire to control noted to be typical of a neo-liberal agenda. The

evidence of contextual acknowledgement in achievement was encouraging, however, contextual influences on success were conveyed as either inevitable or as a 'problem' to be remedied. Those positioned outside the 'norm' were commonly seen to be 'failing', thus creating the 'norm' as the only space for success. This idea of success relates to notions of meritocracy, which are usually seen as neutral or value-free. Success or failure in schools guided by meritocracy is seen as a product of individual effort rather than recognising that some students may benefit from how policy and curriculum is designed.

I have argued that the application of CRT, supported by aspects of the theories of both Foucault and Young can offer important insights into elements of educational discourse in Australia. This combined approach has enabled an illumination of some of the factors that can be seen to inhibit and restrict Indigenous educational achievement. It has shown that a shift in focus from the individual student to discourse and discursive effects can help expose discrimination related to Australia's colonial past and associated dominance of whiteness.

These important insights into the educational discourse demonstrate how the study of discourse opens up opportunities for change. In the following section I will take forward some of the implications of my analysis, beyond my specific study. I will identify some important areas of impact and possibilities for future exploration.

Policy and Educational Practice

Through uncovering some of the silences that impede Indigenous achievement in education, and building on important work of both Australian scholars and those addressing issues of racism in other parts of the world, this study suggests there are possibilities for new ways of addressing educational injustice experienced by Indigenous students. I will suggest briefly some of these possibilities in the following section.

Listening

The policy related documentation analysed in this study reveals the ways Indigenous voices are typically silenced or referred to by others in more powerful positions. This suggests that the act of listening requires greater advocacy within policy and educational practice. CRT offers a useful tool in encouraging listening on the part of the oppressor and opportunities for the oppressed to regain a voice, through the employment of storytelling and counter-storytelling (Ladson-Billings, 2009:23). Oppressors are accustomed to having a voice and often use the ease with which they can be heard to 'construct reality in ways that maintain their privilege' (Ladson-Billings, 2009:24). The access to opportunities to speak and be heard also bestows power, which enables oppressors to govern others: Foucault (1994) asserts that,

Those who try to control, determine, and limit the freedom of others are themselves free individuals who have at their disposal certain instruments they can use to govern others. (p 300)

In spaces that are considered to be ahistorical and colour blind, thus working to silence 'difference', storytelling provides an opportunity to historicise and contextualise these spaces once more and give a voice to those who have been rendered mute (Ladson-Billings, 2009:23).

Listening is also something advocated strongly by Sarah Maddison (2009) in her work regarding Indigenous policy in Australia, in which she calls for the need to redress the legacies of the past in which Indigenous people have been consistently addressed as a 'problem', without having any opportunity to speak about their experiences and offer solutions (p 1-3). My analysis has shown that this is also common in education policy relating to Indigenous people, and therefore there is a need to transform the way both policy and practice listen to Indigenous people. The Victorian education policy, *Wannik*, shows the beginning of a commitment to listening to and working with Indigenous people that is deep and beneficial, although there is still room for the act of listening to be transferred more thoroughly into the intentions of the policy. Solorzano and Yosso (2009) suggest that this experiential knowledge is a key component of the focus on storytelling and voice within CRT (p 133). They note that experiential knowledge is 'critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination' (p 133). As Nakata (2010) points out, storytelling is also often a familiar and powerful medium for Indigenous people in Australia (p 53) and therefore a commitment to this aspect of CRT could be particularly valuable for enabling Indigenous educational justice.

Gewirtz (1998) writes of the importance of listening in a conception of social justice, particularly in diverse communities that have suffered oppression and experienced the constant interference of people trying to remedy their problems. She offers some useful possibilities for engaging with listening, drawing on the work of Fraser, Young and Leonard (p 475). She suggests that an 'ethics of otherness' requires a rejection of the act of surveillance, control and power over others and support of Leonard's call to focus on the act of listening as opposed to always doing or fixing (2008:476). This opens the way then for groups who have typically been diagnosed and managed to be actively involved in the 'doing' or 'fixing'. This also helps to break down the aspects of surveillance, control and disciplinary power noted, with the assistance of Foucault's theory, in my analysis. Todd (2001) also makes important contributions to the possibilities of an ethics of otherness, suggesting an ethical response to the 'Other' requires an openness to enter into a 'veritable conversation' (p 73). True listening therefore relies on coming to a relationship without particular knowledge, without answers, but with a desire to know and therefore hear the 'Other' (p 68).

A commitment to listening of this kind creates a situation in which difference is likely to become more present in interactions, intentions, planning and practice. Difference will need, therefore, to be seen as a strength (not as a problem or as deviance) and new ways of working with difference will need to be established. I will explore this in the following section.

Difference and Responsibility

The analysis within this study demonstrates the prevailing discomfort with the idea of difference and the ways in which whiteness, being 'central' and 'normal', escapes the categorisation of difference. This has created a situation in which difference (or 'non-whiteness') is viewed in a range of negative, disempowering or romantic ways. In order for Indigenous students to experience educational justice, therefore, the current understanding of difference must be transformed.

Young (1990) offers much advice as to how to negotiate a politics of difference in striving for social justice. She suggests, 'the alternative to an essentializing, stigmatizing meaning of difference as opposition is an understanding of difference as specificity, variation' (p 171). She suggests this relational understanding of difference does not need to force all members of a particular group under the same attributes (Young, 2000:90) and moves away from being descriptive, focusing instead on the relations and interactions of different groups, thus decentering dominant groups (Young, 1990:171). Nakata articulates this idea of relational difference in his call for a new cross-cultural space in Australia,

What is needed is consideration of a different conceptualisation of the cross-cultural space, not as a clash of opposites and differences but as a layered and very complex entanglement of concepts, theories and sets of meanings of a knowledge system. (cited in McGloin, 2009:36)

Working with difference therefore is inherently complex and carries risks and challenges, particularly given the way in which difference has been treated in the past in Australia, and especially in relation to Indigenous people. Young (1990) addresses some of the risks associated with dealing with difference, noting there are risks in both ignoring and addressing the issue of difference (p 174). The overt and damaging racism of past policies addressing Indigenous people in which their cultures, languages and humanity were systematically undermined and degraded has created a situation in which current policies related specifically to their differences are required to redress the affects of this oppression. As demonstrated by my analysis, however, there is a danger of this reinstating stigma and exclusion (Young, 1990:174). The challenge therefore is not to ignore these differences but to transform them from a position of needing remedy to one of power and possibility. Steele (2009) suggests that

challenging 'remediation' must occur in order to overcome stereotypes that shape poor intellectual identity and performance (p 182). Thus a new way of framing Indigenous educational disadvantage in which Indigenous students are not only seen as needing to 'catch up' and be 'corrected' is required to transcend current disadvantage.

This also requires those in education in positions of power – that have been inherited according to a history of white supremacy – to take responsibility for the damage that has been inflicted on Indigenous people due to a conception of difference that has placed them outside of the 'norm'. There is a need then to distinguish between blame and responsibility and Young (1990) asserts that,

People and institutions can and should be held responsible for unconscious and unintended behavior, actions, or attitudes that contribute to oppression. (p 151)

Responsibility for oppression, however, requires both disruption of normative values, standards and behaviours and an unavoidable discomfort on many levels: discomfort that comes through realisation that oppression continues to impact the education system; discomfort in the realisation that people with good intentions often operate within a subject position in which their power prevents them from noticing their 'difference'; and discomfort that will be inherent in the complex negotiation of different perspectives, experiences and knowledges that, once oppression is broken down, come to inhabit a relational space of difference. I will explore the effects of these issues in the following section.

Disruption and Discomfort

My analysis, through exposing some of the injustices and inequalities in an education system purportedly striving for justice and equality for all students, creates a situation of inevitable discomfort. This realisation is unpopular in a country that likes to project egalitarian values, often referring to 'a fair go for all'. The notion that some people may be advantaged is uncomfortable. Helping those who are disadvantaged to step up to the equal playing field is much more appealing (for those who are advantaged), it sits nicely with benevolent tendencies, reaching out to those in need. In this space of benevolence, of generosity and concern, education can be seen as a panacea. Many who have experienced oppression, however, such as Frantz Fanon, have drawn attention to its important role in colonial domination (Leonardo and Porter, 2010:143). It is distressing then to catch a glimpse of the prospect that even the current educational practices, invested in to liberate, may in fact be perpetuating the very disadvantage it is hoped they can alleviate. And yet, it also provides an opportunity to embrace these feelings as a point of connection (after all, Indigenous people have been feeling discomfort while being forced to inhabit a 'white' world for hundreds of years) and commit to new ways of educating and relating.

Leonardo (2009) alludes to this discomfort when he reminds us that racism is not confined to white supremacists but it is also 'the domain of average, tolerant people, of lovers of diversity, and of believers of justice' (p 265). This then raises the question, what happens when average tolerant people, lovers of diversity and believers in justice realise they too are implicated in race injustices? What choices do they/we have for dealing with this new facet to their/our identity? Allen (2004) outlines some reasons why this type of conversation is often unsettling for whites who are becoming aware of their oppressor subject position,

Critical dialogue between members of oppressor and oppressed groups does not occur on equal grounds. Oppression creates a communicative illusion where it appears as though the oppressor is using common sense and the oppressed is irrational. To maintain this illusion, oppressors will do whatever it takes to prevent the oppressed from naming their oppression. (p 132)

It is here that oppressors (whether they be intentional or not) have an opportunity to disrupt and interrogate the processes, structures and 'norms' that hide and deepen oppression and disadvantage.

Both Leonardo and Porter (2010) and hooks (2003) address the inevitability that an interrogation of whiteness will contain discomfort, uncertainty and anxiety and they suggest these are necessary ingredients for justice. Leonardo and Porter (2010) discuss the growing trend for 'safety discourses on race' which work predominantly to protect white people from the discomfort of race dialogue (p 140-141), which then serves to reinforce white control and dominance. They instead suggest the need for educators to create a pedagogy in which the violence of 'safe-space' dialogue is undone and a liberatory form of violence is installed which allows for race discussion that 'shifts the standards of humanity' (p 149). hooks (2003) supports this when she suggests that safety is not the best or only opportunity for bonding across race discussions and experiences (p 64).

A disruption of the common conceptions of difference requires new ways of working with this concept and Young (1990) suggests a relational form of difference denies exclusion, ensuring then that 'difference no longer implies groups lie outside one another' (p 171). This understanding of difference recognises that we are interconnected (Young, 2001:12) and our capacities to experience justice rely on seeing both our own and other peoples experiences as 'different' and in relationship.

Conclusion

This chapter has drawn together the various threads of my analysis and indicated the different ways in which it has attempted to make a contribution to conceptual and policy debates regarding constructions of Indigenous achievement in Australian education. I

have suggested that bringing together CRT with aspects of Foucault's and Young's work has helped to bring some new perspectives to structural injustices that maintain a view of Indigenous students as in deficit; this in turn, I suggest, both contributes to their underachievement in Western knowledge systems and devalues their own cultural knowledges and identities.

This study has also brought to the surface possibilities for working towards greater educational achievement and justice for Indigenous students through transforming aspects of the education system, which cause oppression and maintain a perception that students outside the 'norm' are in need of 'correction'. The possibilities for change presented include a commitment to listening to establish an 'ethics of otherness', a commitment to including difference as a strength, and the commitment to disruption and discomfort that 'shift the standards of humanity' in order to address the violence that is maintained through remnants of colonial superiority.

CONCLUSION

The previous chapter has distilled the major insights and arguments of this thesis. It has outlined the contribution offered by my conceptual approach and policy analysis, for building better understandings of Indigenous educational disadvantage, and it has suggested looking at different ways to facilitate these students' achievement. Chapter five has also drawn together some of the implications of these findings to indicate some possibilities for change and further exploration. This conclusion, therefore, will briefly summarise the main aims and arguments of this thesis, outline the limitations of this study and suggest some ways in which this research could be built upon and extended.

Through a close analysis of policy documents I have drawn attention to some of the silences that surround the perceived failure of Indigenous students to achieve educationally. I have argued that separate policies for Indigenous education are in part a response to the structural inability of mainstream education policies to accommodate difference – except as 'Other'. My analysis has helped to illuminate ways in which 'whiteness' can be seen to influence current education discourses. I have also argued that although it is important to recognise and document patterns of Indigenous disadvantage, explanations of the causes of disadvantage have often focused on Indigenous people and their 'lack', and not on the 'regimes of truth' that drive the discourses of educational failure and may contribute to exclusion of other 'truths'.

This thesis began with an introduction, which outlined the scope and rationale of my study, followed by a literature review in chapter one that developed a critical review of three main bodies of literature: 'Indigenous Education', 'The Study of Whiteness' and 'Critical Policy Studies'. This was followed by a chapter that explained the theoretical and methodological choices made to support this research. These chapters established a context for the close policy analysis developed in chapters three and four.

In chapter three my analysis of policy and reports addressing Indigenous disadvantage and inclusion revealed the ways in which disadvantage is attributed to Indigenous students according to a model of 'white' success. I argued that this leads to understandings of Indigenous students based on individual and cultural deficits, and focuses on the individual's responsibility to 'catch up', rather than questioning the structural dominance that may be impeding achievement. Analysis instead of the discursive construction of Indigenous students as 'included' was found to offer a shift away from a deficit conception common to the effects of discourses of disadvantage. I further argued that a focus on inclusion offered more opportunities for Indigenous participation, however, this was often seen to be constrained by a persistent power relationship in which Indigenous people were 'invited' to offer 'advice' and 'perspectives', thus maintaining the systemic potency and centrality of 'whiteness'.

In chapter four, my examination of policy documents and related texts concerned with better education for the general student body, attempted to illuminate the ways in which success is typically focused on the individual and a singular pathway to achievement. Notions of equity, excellence and quality were found to rely on meritocratic assumptions and national assessment documents were shown to privilege a 'white' cultural identity. The discourse of accountability and improvement was found to rely heavily on advocacy of sameness in order to review, compare and diagnose the improvement of schools across states and territories.

I have argued throughout that the strong presence of 'whiteness' as a powerful 'regime of truth' has the effect of disempowering Indigenous people in a number of ways: their own knowledge, learning styles, cultures and identities are devalued; they have to endeavour to achieve in a Western knowledge tradition inhibited by a discourse of failure; and they are often encouraged to assimilate into a singular pathway to success, which both lacks recognition of different identities and experiences, and fails to recognise that success can be achieved through multiple means.

This has been a small-scale study, shaped by the constraints of thesis length and time, and there are necessarily limitations in study design and type and level of analysis. A vast range of policy and report material was initially canvassed and could have been analysed in depth. My particular selections for close analysis were made because of the opportunities they enabled for comparison in a number of ways, and the insights they offered into understanding the discourse related to Indigenous students and values that dominate educational intentions. Close analysis of a greater range of documents would have been able to give a more comprehensive view of the issues of interest to this work. While beyond the scope of this present study, there remains a considerable need for more comparative – transnational and national – policy analysis to be undertaken in this important area. Moreover, this study has not investigated the ways in which policy discourses and values are implemented and negotiated in schools. Another kind of study investigating the issues examined here, could have employed a more qualitative, interpretive or action research approach to gain insight into the ways in which teachers, students and parents envisage Indigenous disadvantage, achievement, inclusion, success and participation; this would be a valuable area for future research. A study designed to establish an understanding of how those involved in education view and understand diversity would also be an important area for future research.

Despite these limitations, this study has been able to open up some new ways of thinking about Indigenous education, and to reconceptualise the ways in which issues of inclusion and equity are encountered in educational intentions and practice, particularly in relation to Indigenous Australians. This, in turn, has provided some groundwork for investigating these issues further and in relation to other matters of racism, oppression

and dominance. As indicated in chapter five, one possibility for extending this study is an investigation of the notion of listening and how this might be enacted in education policy and practice to enable greater participation of those typically excluded through the type of regimes of truth examined in this study. Another avenue for further investigation is examination of the notion of difference and the possibilities for working with this in school settings, particularly within the present discourse of standardisation, ranking and competition which typically relies on sameness.

The central argument developed throughout this study is that there is an urgent need to shift thinking about Indigenous educational disadvantage if there is to be any significant movement towards educational justice for Indigenous students. This will involve recognising the oppressive impact of our colonial past and the effect 'whiteness' continues to have on the values that guide education today.

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